



MYTHOLOGY

THE DC COMICS ART OF ALEX ROSS

CHIP KIDD • GEOFF SPEAR

Here is the incomparable cast of the DC Comics universe: Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, the Flash, Aquaman, the Green Lantern, and the rest of the Justice League as you've never seen them before. *Mythology* brings together the best-loved comic characters in the world, brought to life by one of the most astonishing young artists working in the medium today, Alex Ross. The award-winning designer/writer Chip Kidd and photographer Geoff Spear have teamed up to create a book like no other, with an introduction by M. Night Shyamalan, the acclaimed director of *Signs* and *The Sixth Sense*.

Ross has often been called "the Norman Rockwell of comics," and this book reveals not only his lifelong love of these classic super heroes but also his vision. *Mythology* takes you into the studio for a behind-the-scenes look at his fascinating creative process. The combination of Ross's dynamic art and Kidd's kinetic design make images from his most memorable stories—including *Kingdom Come*, *Superman: Peace on Earth*, *Batman: War on Crime*, and *Uncle Sam*—saw off the more than 280 pages. There are also hundreds of never-before-seen sketches, limited edition prints, and prototype sculptures. Vintage DC comic panels are interspersed throughout, as reference points from which Ross launches his extraordinary interpretations.

And most exciting for Ross fans, inside is a DC Comics first: an exclusive, original Superman-Batman story, written by Kidd and painted by Ross. Also included is an all-new origin of Robin, written by Paul Dini. *Mythology* is a book in which every page explodes with the power of the icons it celebrates.



SUPERMAN

RED
BLUE &
YELLOW

CAPTAIN
MARVEL

RED &
YELLOW

\$25.00 USA
\$53.00 Canada

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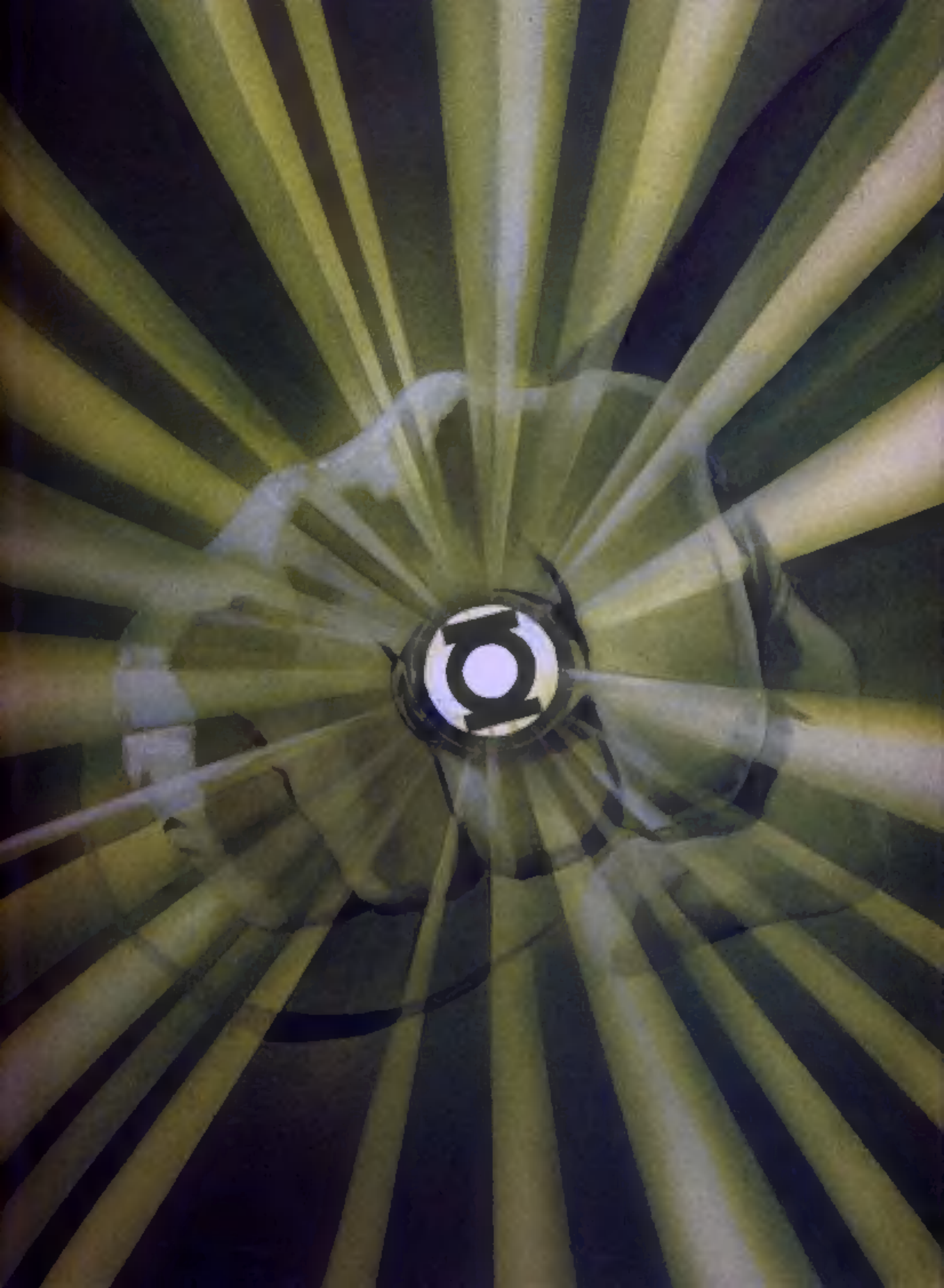
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BELOW: Alex Ross, age 7.

OPPOSITE: Superboy by Alex Ross, age 7 (1977).

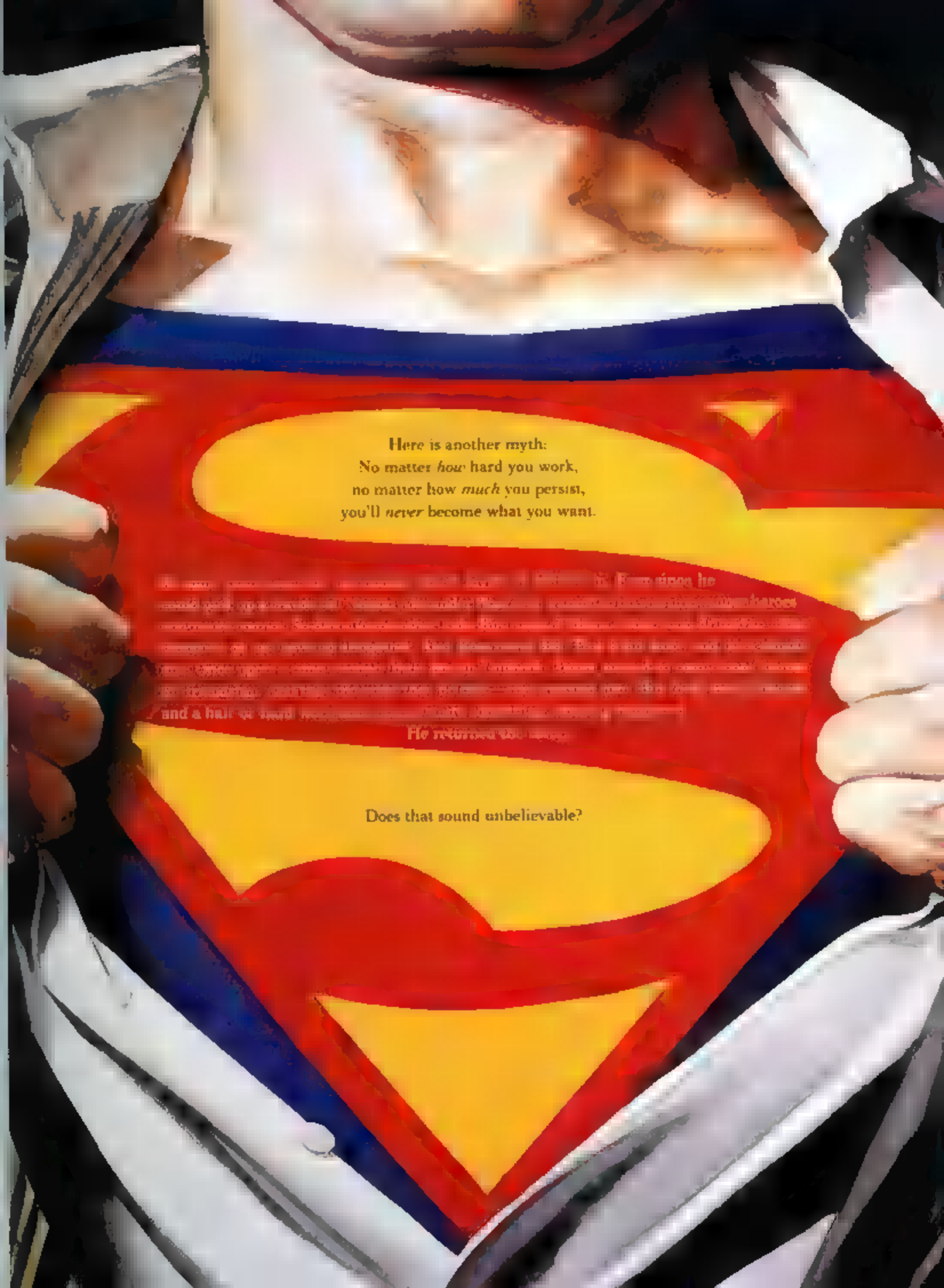


Air and Space Museum
1977

Alex Ross, age 11

by Alex Ross, age 32 (2002)





Here is another myth:
No matter *how* hard you work,
no matter how *much* you persist,
you'll *never* become what you want.

It was a...
and a half of...
He returned to...

Does that sound unbelievable?



MYTHOLOGY.



THE DC COMICS ART OF ALEX ROSS

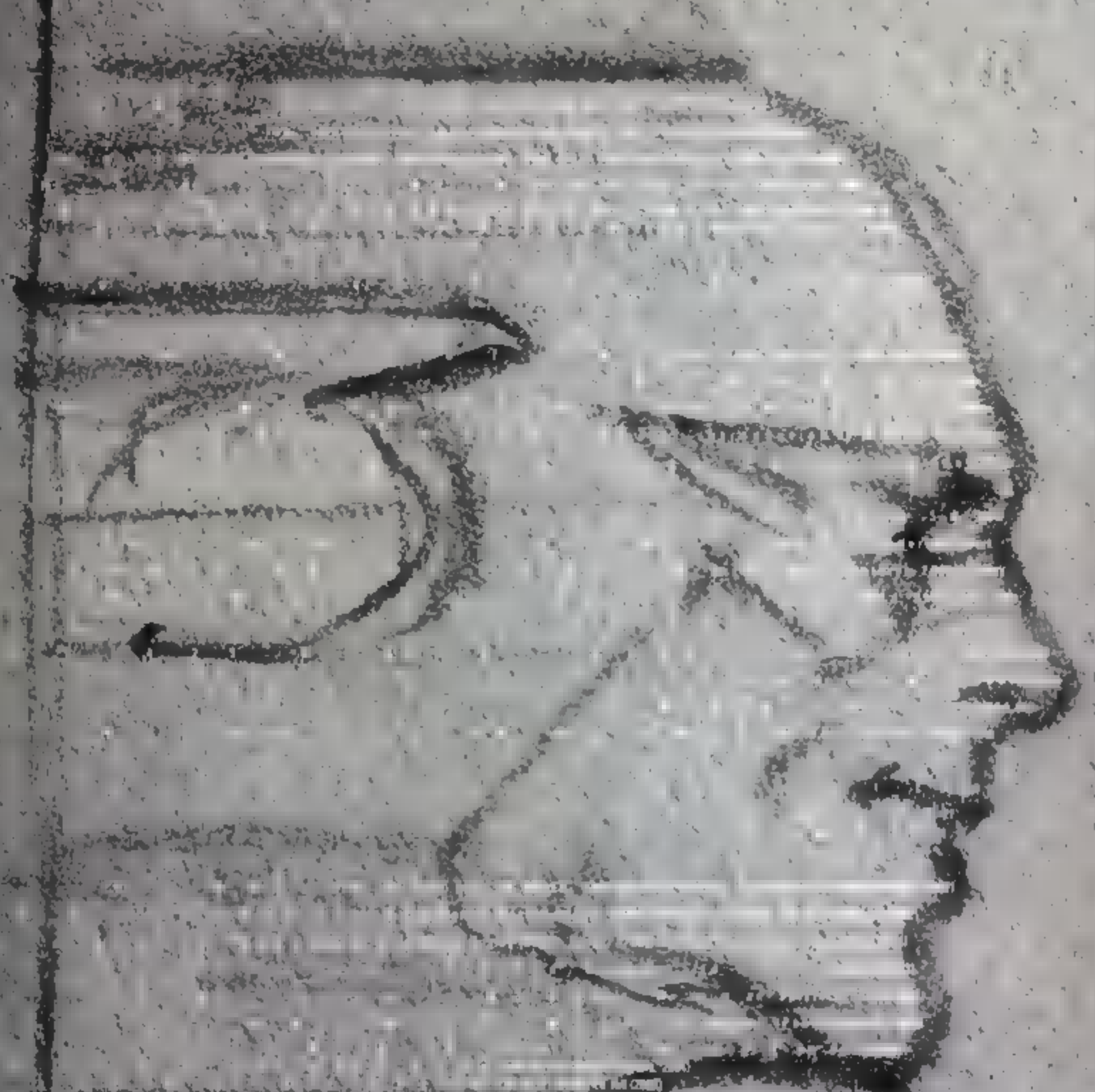


PANTHEON BOOKS NEW YORK

ART DIRECTION, DESIGN, TEXT BY
CHIP YIDD



PHOTOGRAPHED BY GEORGE BEAR



THE
WORLD
IS
A
GARDEN
AND
WE
ARE
THE
FLOWERS



for Lynette



Myth is the secret opening through which the unrelaxable energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic myth, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth.

—JOSEPH CAMPBELL

The Hero with a Thousand Faces

(1949)

INTRODUCTION.


There was something about the way Zappalano was lounging in his chair. It was more than the posture; it was a sense of weight on his being. He was relaxed, I found this vision of a hero so comfortable and powerful. Alex Zappalano always brings the mythical quality for me. He connects me with the heroes of laws to the very physical world of comic books. He gives me a rope so I can still climb up and dream.

After *The Sixth Sense*, I began work on my film *Unbreakable*. In 2000, I got in touch with Alex and we talked over dinner. I told him I was a fan. He was modest and bowed a little. He said, "What are you doing next?" I told him I was making a movie about comic books. His expression went up, which for Alex is like jumping up and down. I told him I wanted to get his perspective on comics—pick his brain. He has been very patient and kind with me throughout our friendship. I told him we had pictures of his Superman and Batman costumes in our production offices on the movie. My team was using his approach to comic books as a guide for how to make the movie real. *Unbreakable* has come out during the best of times. Because for our heroes, the human condition, it will always have relevance.

Alex sent me a large framed picture of Batman perched on a building looking down over Gotham City. It is in my house in the workout room used for real-life heroes like Muhammad Ali and Michael Jordan. There is something about the way Batman is positioned, the way he looks anxious and tense and watchful. He seems to be in control. It is inspiring.

— M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN





"A glorious place, a glorious age, I tell you!
A very Neon Renaissance—And the
myths that actually touched you in that
time—not Hercules, Orpheus, Ulysses and
Aeneas—but Superman, Captain Marvel,
Batman."

—TOM WOLFE,

The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (1968).

AND SO...

Nelson Alexander Ross was born on January 22, 1970, in Portland, Oregon, to Clark Ross, a minister, and his wife Lynette, a homemaker and former commercial illustrator. The youngest of four, little Alex immediately took to art, and filled his days with drawing. He loved comic books and was endlessly inspired by them.


In 1978, Alex moved to Lubbock, Texas, where his father would lead a United Church of Christ ministry. This was to have a profound effect on him. With his brother and two sisters grown and moved away, the change meant a dearth of children his age for companionship. There were few parishioners as well, which often made for lonely Sunday mornings watching his father preach to as few as a dozen people. It was not easy. But Alex attended dutifully and never fell into the clichéd misbehavior typical of "preacher's kids"—he didn't drink, do drugs, or otherwise rebel. He found his true recreation and release in art. Drawing demands solitude, and that's what he had. That and an ache to make comics and lose himself in their many worlds. Eventually Alex found a way to interweave his own story with theirs. In some ways it seems predestined—he wanted everyone to appreciate his father, so why not make him into a comics character? And in 1996 (nine years after he graduated high school) he would literally do just that. In one of the neatest tricks ever of comics "casting," Alex used his father as the model for Norman McKay, the protagonist of *Kingdom Come*, an epic examination of the DC Comics Universe. In the years since, Alex's greatest triumph has been to blur the line between fantasy and reality, to take a medium traditionally equipped with two dimensions and give it the illusion of a third. But first there would be a lot of practice, schooling, trial, and failure. Making images is harder than it looks.


But, at least in the Ross household, it was a family tradition. . . .



GENEALOGY.



From the late 1940s through the mid-1950s, Ross's mother Lynette worked as a freelance fashion illustrator in Chicago. The drawings on these two pages are all hers, most of them done in her late teens and early twenties. She had studied at Chicago's American Academy of Art, where her son would follow her  than forty-one years later.

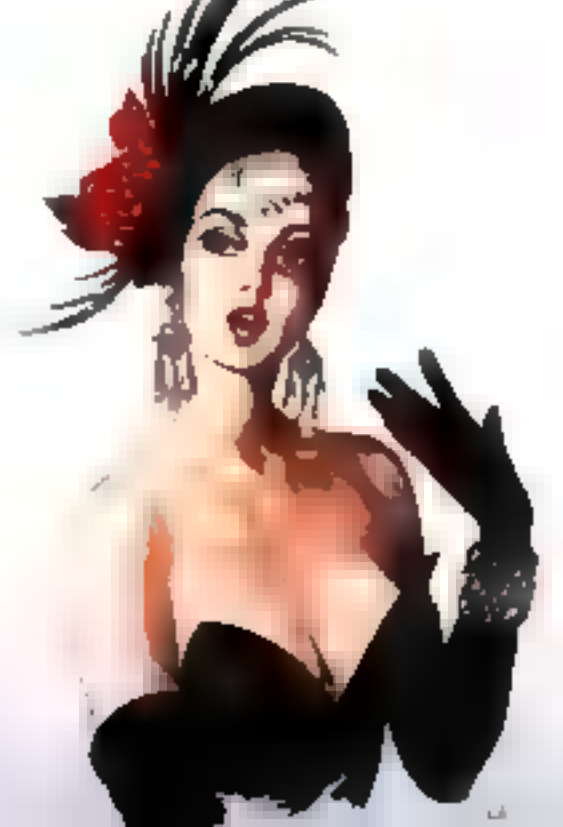
Remarkably, Ross was not greatly influenced by his mother's work growing up, chiefly because he hadn't seen her creating it—by the time he was born she had long-since abandoned an artistic career to start a family. "I just didn't really like doing it," she remembers, "but it was a way to make my own money and get a little independence. What I really wanted was to marry and raise children." As skilled as she was, Lynette often felt the sting of  industry that was dominated by men. "Not many girls did this kind of work at that time. It was clear that I was only going to go so far."



It is tempting to look at these examples and think: *Oh, so that's where he got it.* And certainly, a case could be made that he had a genetic head start. But talent like Alex's doesn't just arrive fully formed, and his childhood drawings—as you'll see—bear this out. What did matter was his intense focus from the very beginning. From an early age he knew exactly what he wanted—to be a comic book illustrator—and followed a path, clear to him, to make it happen. Says Lynette: "I just didn't have the ambition that he does."



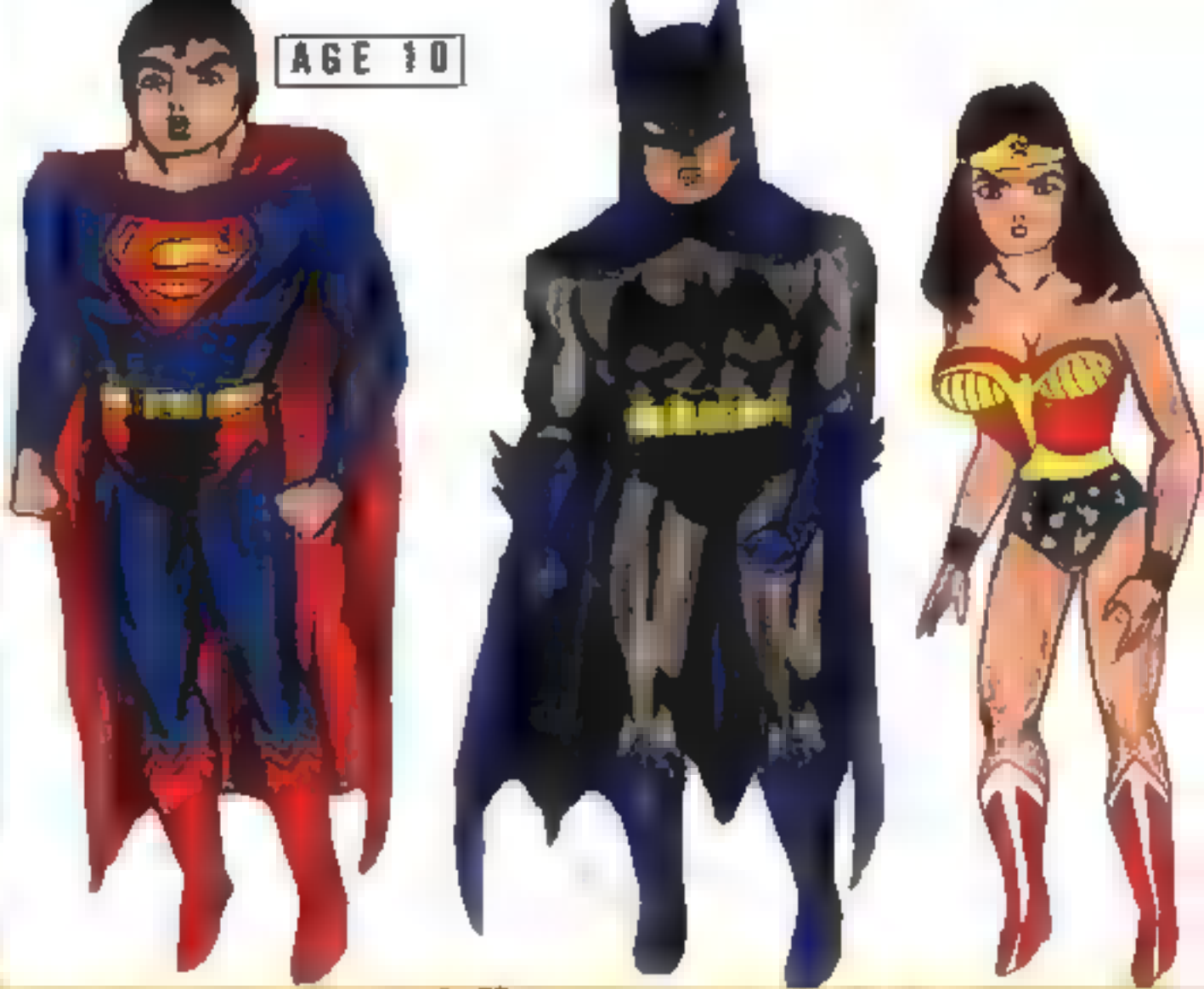
BUT I'M NOT
IN COSTUME!



AGE 10

What is it about the pantheon of DC Comics super heroes that has always fascinated Alex? "The flamboyance, the mystery. They're the ultimate people. To me, sports figures seemed mundane by comparison. Once I showed interest in drawing comics, my mother would buy me titles aimed at kids. *Spidey Super Stories* is the first I remember. I also pored over Michael Fleisher's encyclopedias on Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman from the 1970s.

"As an adolescent you need order in your world, and super heroes have that, a sense of ethics that would never change—they would never be less than perfect, fighting for their ideals. They deal succinctly with moral issues, in a way that religion doesn't. Or rather, religion does, but in a much more complicated and often confusing manner."



AGE 12



1938
1939
1940
1940
1940
1940
1940

HOURLMAN 1940
GREEN LANTERN 1940
FLASH 1940
DE FATE 1940
WONDER WOMAN 1941

OPPOSITE, LOWER LEFT: The cover of *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes*, (October-November 1976). Art by Mike Grell.

DETECTIVE COMICS, INC.
(DC Comics, Inc.)



THE KID [holding a box of old stuff]:
I found these in a box of old stuff
I found in my room. They were
construction paper figures of the
League. "Oh my GOD! We have
these for the book. They're amazing!"

THE KID [to the author]:
They're awesome. Absolutely not.

THE KID: What are you nuts? We've got to
show these.

AR: Forget it.

CK: What?

AR: I was embarrassed. I made those.
They look so goofy. It's embarrassing.

CK: Nonsense.

AR: Besides, I remember I made them
look goofy on purpose. It was a political
statement. Like the *Capitol*!

CK: Well, if I explain that in the text,
it's not their fault, is it?

The wings are darts.

CK: I'll take that as a yes.





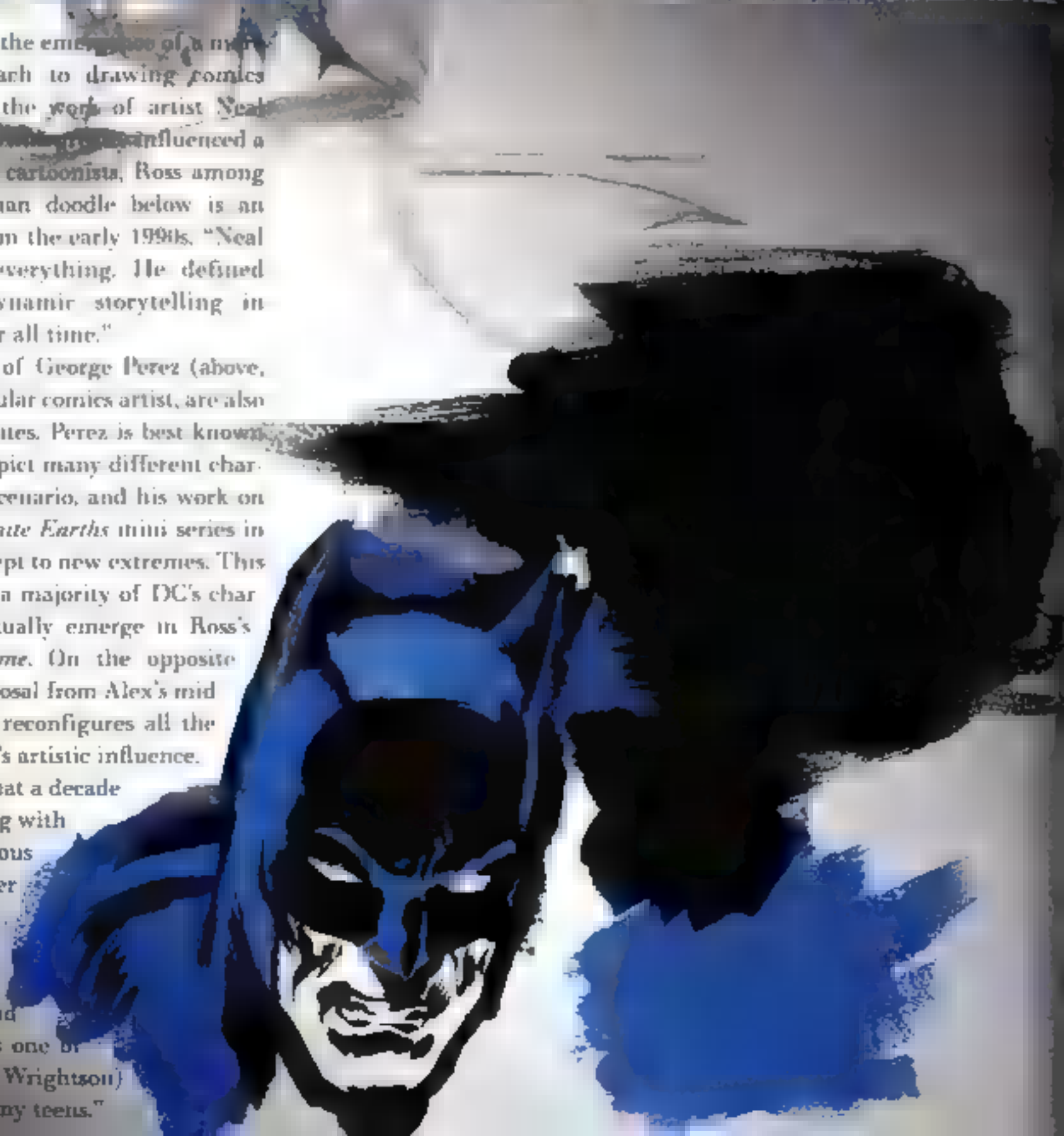


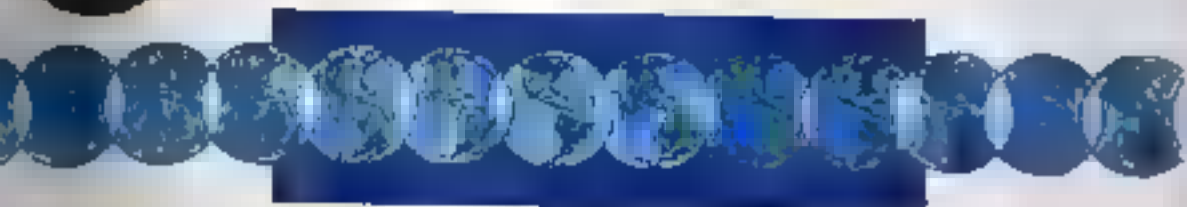
The late 1960s saw the emergence of a more naturalistic approach to drawing comics characters, led by the work of artist Neal Adams (above), who influenced a new generation of cartoonists, Ross among them. Alex's Batman doodle below is an Adams exercise from the early 1990s. "Neal Adams changed everything. He defined what realistic, dynamic storytelling in comics would be for all time."

The drawings of George Perez (above, right), another popular comics artist, are also among Ross's favorites. Perez is best known for his ability to depict many different characters in a single scenario, and his work on DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths* mini series in 1985 took the concept to new extremes. This ambition to depict a majority of DC's characters would eventually emerge in Ross's own *Kingdom Come*. On the opposite page, a comics proposal from Alex's mid-teens in which he reconfigures all the

DC heroes, comes from Perez's artistic influence. Little could he have known that a decade later he would be collaborating with his hero on the most ambitious painting of his career, the cover for the hardcover edition of . . . *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

"Perez grouped the heroes together on an epic scale, and that was very inspiring. He's one of two artists (along with Bernie Wrightson) whose work I studiously copied in my teens."

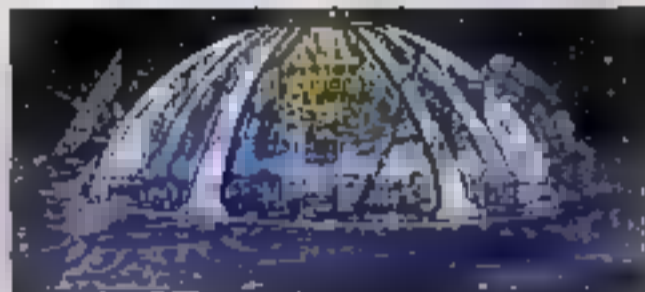




In the history of the multiverse the EARTH 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, X, and C are well known but few know of the far-advanced world of EARTH - 10 where in the year 2050 was formed the



This futuristic team comprised of superior-heroes beings protect the planet EARTH and solar system of SOL from any dangerous and threatening forces.



The JUSTICE UNION of EARTH holds a headquarters base upon the moon along with other satellites orbiting earth.

The JUE members are collective counterparts from the other alternate earth's super-heroes and have their powers magnified 10 times. In this advanced world there are no super-villains and virtually all crime and poverty have been eliminated.

The groups adversary come from outside the planet earth and have formed a society of superior-villains principally led by the brilliant but mad Lex Lethal and mercilessly insane killer.

This tells the story of the alternate universe of EARTH - 10.

FALCON



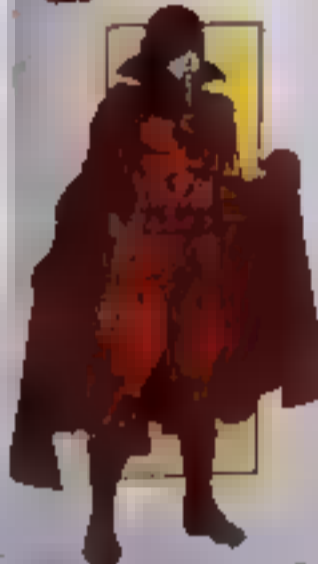
THE DEITY



THE NIGHTHAWK



STORM



OCEANMAN



WONDERFUL WOMAN



The following is a visual list of the super-beings who form the organization of the JUE.

GREEN BULLET



BLACK EAGLE



LEO



THE BLAST



THE DARK KNIGHT



JOHNNY DUCK



GALAXYMAN



RED STOPPEDO



ZAGODDESS



DOCTOR PHANTASM



SUPERIORMAN



BATMAN





ABOVE A pivotal assignment during Ross's stint at the American Academy of Art—drawing from a photograph—pencil rough and then colored pencil finish (1988). "With this solution I proved to myself I could draw 'photo-realistically' by eye, relying on the Artograph—which is basically an old-fashioned tracing machine—something I didn't want to become dependent on." Oil portraits of Lynette and Clark Ross by Alex Ross in an effort to get portrait work



"Alex always turned his assignments in early," recalls Rich Kryzka, one of Ross's instructors at the American Academy of Art from 1988 to 1989. "And it always drove the other students crazy." Kryzka and Ross have remained friends, partly due to their mutual love of comics. "I gave a Batman-themed Halloween party once, and Alex came as the Joker. He couldn't speak all night because part of his costume was a wire rig that fit into his mouth and gave him a permanent smile. That nutty faithfulness to detail—that's Alex."

In 1989, Ross was hired by the Leo Burnett advertising agency in Chicago, where he created ad layouts, animations, and commercial storyboards for the next three-and-a-half years. The money was good, but he never saw the job as anything other than a stepping stone to the comics field. Even his renderings for a beer commercial, below, have a super-heroic theme. "I imagined that getting into comics was going to be extremely difficult, and I wanted a job in the meantime that would require figure drawing and storytelling."

It was at Burnett that Alex met Frank Kasy, a veteran commercial illustrator and art director whose work appears on the right. Kasy would eventually play a major role in Ross's career, though one he could have scarcely imagined when they first met—Kasy would become the live model for Alex's version of Superman. "Frank was an interesting character—definitely the king of the art department table. He would often use himself as a model in his own work, so it seemed logical that I would, too."

Alex's break into the comic book industry came earlier than expected (he was all of nineteen), with *Terminator: The Burning Earth* (Now Comics, 1989), based on the 1984 Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. "It was offered to Jim Wisniewski, one of my co-workers at Burnett, and he passed the chance on to me. I showed Now my portfolio and they gave me the job." An inauspicious beginning, but it was his foot in the door and got the attention of the editors at Marvel Comics.



1. BEACH: Whipped hot for some reason. I drew it just because, no great deal to it.



2. Another woman carrying body. With a little bit of highlighted details, yeah.



3. Another woman carrying body.



4. Another woman carrying body.



Rockwell's 'The Right to Know' (top) and the cover of *Kingdom Come* #2 (right).
Illustration: Norman Rockwell; Cover: Alex Ross

INFLUENCES.

The name most often mentioned as an influence on Ross is Norman Rockwell, and it's true they share a lot of the same methods, such as relying heavily on photographs to inform how one obtains certain lighting and textural effects. And Rockwell's signature group portraits—like "The Right to Know" from 1968 (above)—formed the basis for Ross's cover of *Kingdom Come* #2 (right).

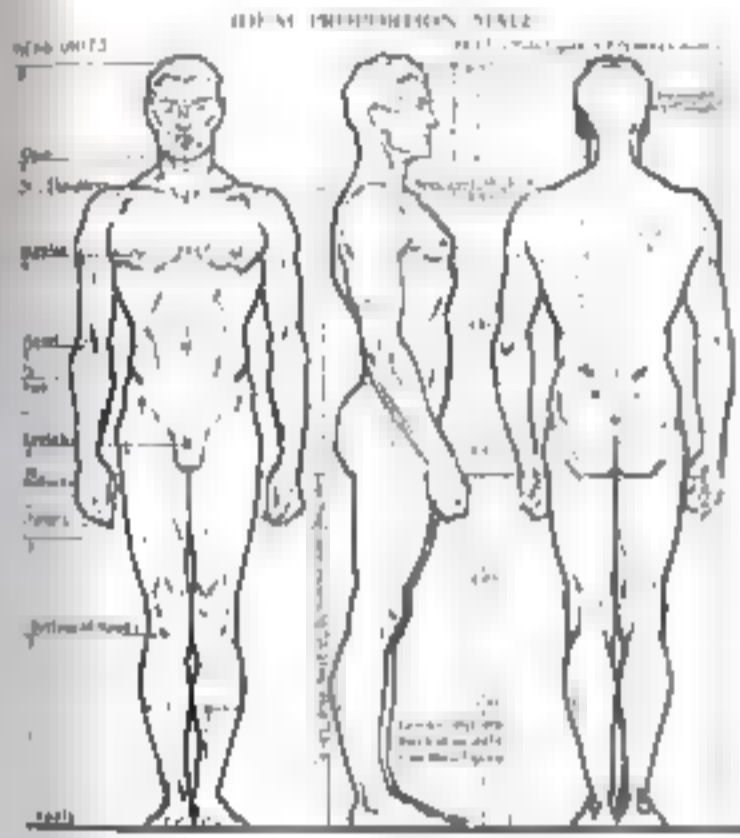
"I love the illusion—that you have a group of people standing three or four deep and yet no one recedes, everyone is the same size, and the lighting mysteriously comes from below. It's totally impossible, but if you render it in a representational way, the viewer accepts it."



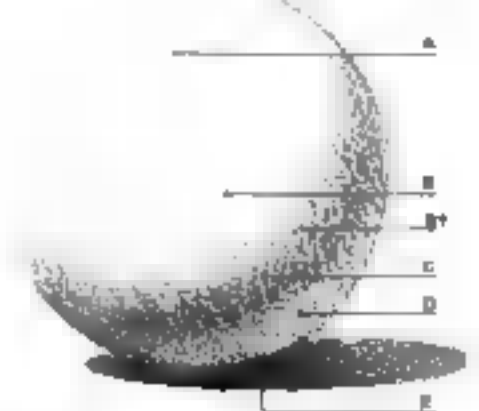
A NEW APPROACH

by

ANDREW LOOMIS



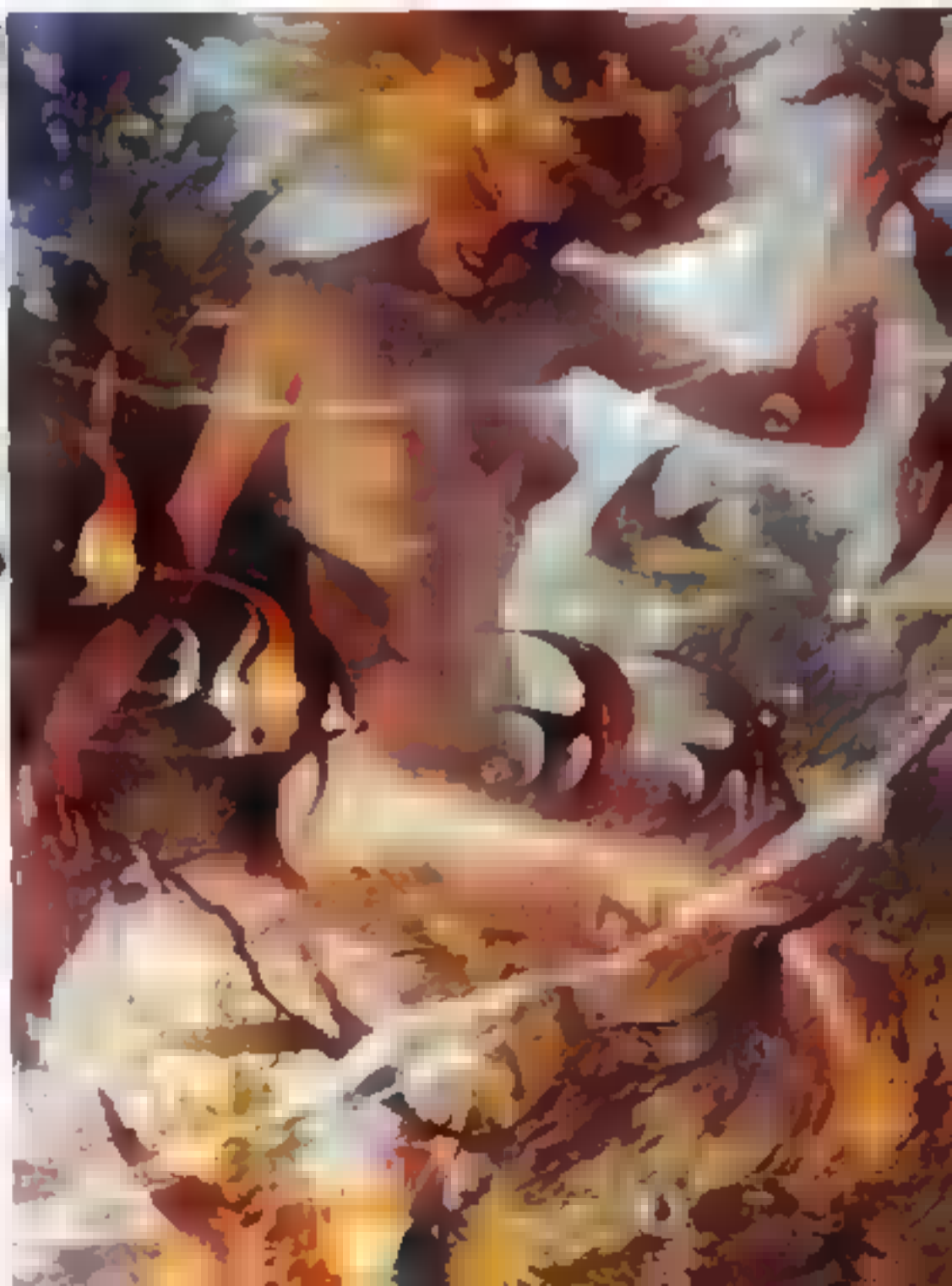
I will admit: I'd never heard of Andrew Loomis (1892-1959) until Alex showed me a book of his work, but the instant he did, it explained a lot. As a stylist Alex actually owes far more to this twentieth century illustrator than he ever did to Rockwell, or anyone else. Loomis's illustrations graced the pages of many of the major national magazines of his day. He also wrote books on art instruction, and the images on this and the next page are from his *Creative Illustration* (1947) and *Figure Drawing For All It's Worth* (1946). "Loomis's realistic approach infected me with the desire to make all my work, comics and otherwise, fully believable."



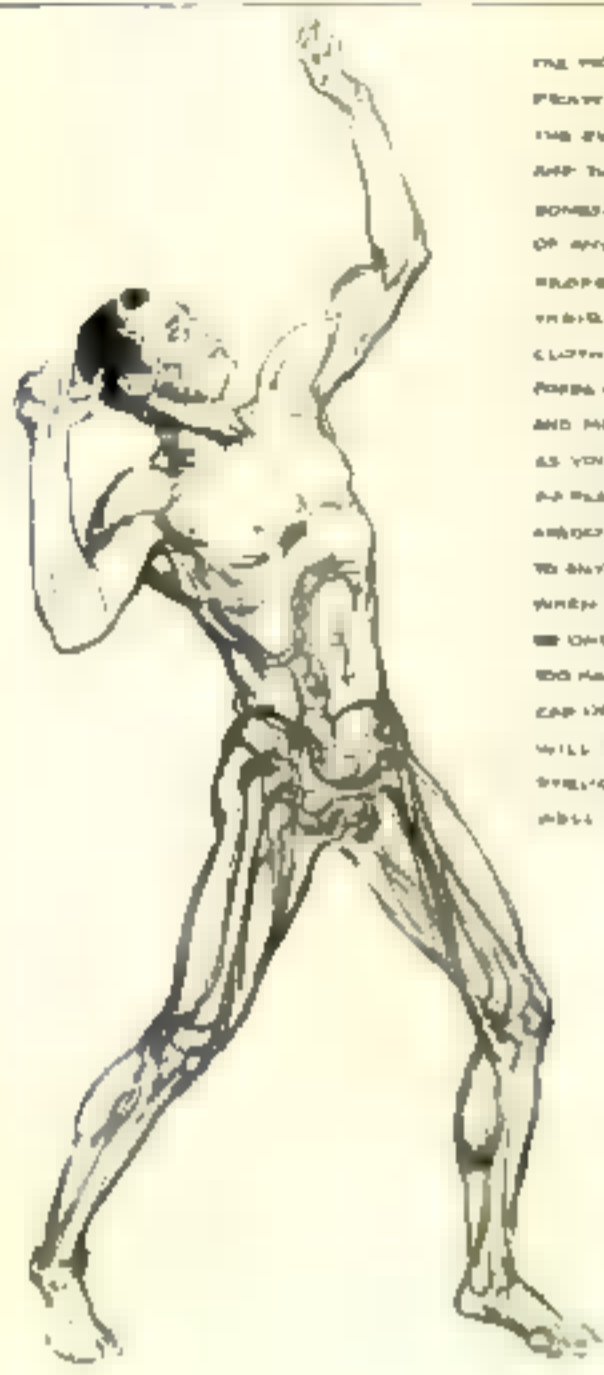
- A HIGHLIGHT "NOON"
- B. HALF TONE "TWILIGHT, BREAKDOW"
- C. SHADOW "NIGHT"
- D. REFLECT "MOONLIGHT"
- E. CAST SHADOW "ECLIPSE"



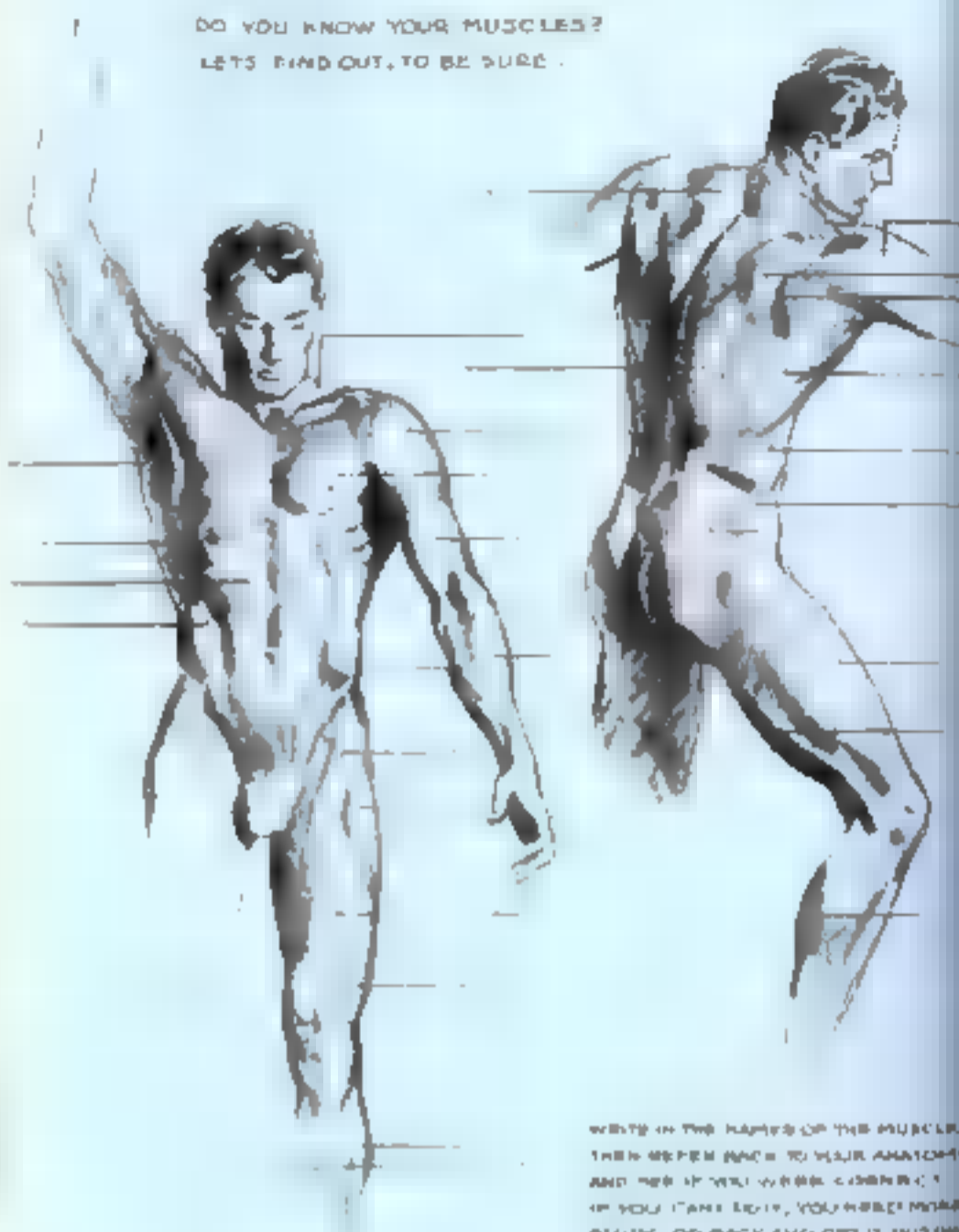
CHARCOAL AND CHALK ON GREY PAPER



TOTAL PROBLEMS WORKED OUT IN A PRELIMINARY CHARCOAL STUDY MAY RESULT IN A MORE URGENT AND SPONTANEOUS FINAL PAINTING. IT DOES TO PLAN IT.



THE MOST COMMON WAY TO LEARN TO DRAW THE FIGURE IS TO START WITH THE SKELETON BUILDING IN THE BONES AND THEN THE MAIN MUSCLES OVER THE BONES. YOU CAN START WITH COPIES OF ANY FIGURE, OR A MODEL. MANY PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS BUILD UP THEIR FIGURES BEFORE ADDING THE CLOTHING. TRY IT WITH VERY SIMPLE POSES AT FIRST. SPECIALLY THE BONES AND MUSCLES WILL BECOME BATTERED AS YOU DRAW. YOU WILL SEE THEM APPEAR ON LIGHT, HAZY AND ANOTHER KNOW THAT IT IS APPEARING TO ANY ARTIST WHO KNOWS ANATOMY WHEN THE OTHER PERSON DOES NOT. BE ONE WHO KNOWS THE STRUCTURE IS SO HARD ANYWAY TO GET THE HANDS CAP IN AND KNOWING YOUR TIME WILL BE TO PREPARE TO HAVE TO STRUCTURE WITH CONSTRUCTION AS WELL AS ALL THE OTHER THINGS.



DO YOU KNOW YOUR MUSCLES?
LET'S FIND OUT, TO BE SURE.

WRITE IN THE NAMES OF THE MUSCLES THEN REFER BACK TO YOUR ANATOMY AND SEE IF YOU WERE CORRECT. IF YOU CAN'T DO IT, YOU NEED MORE PRACTICE. GO BACK AND GET IT RIGHT. YOU WILL NEVER BE NOBODY.

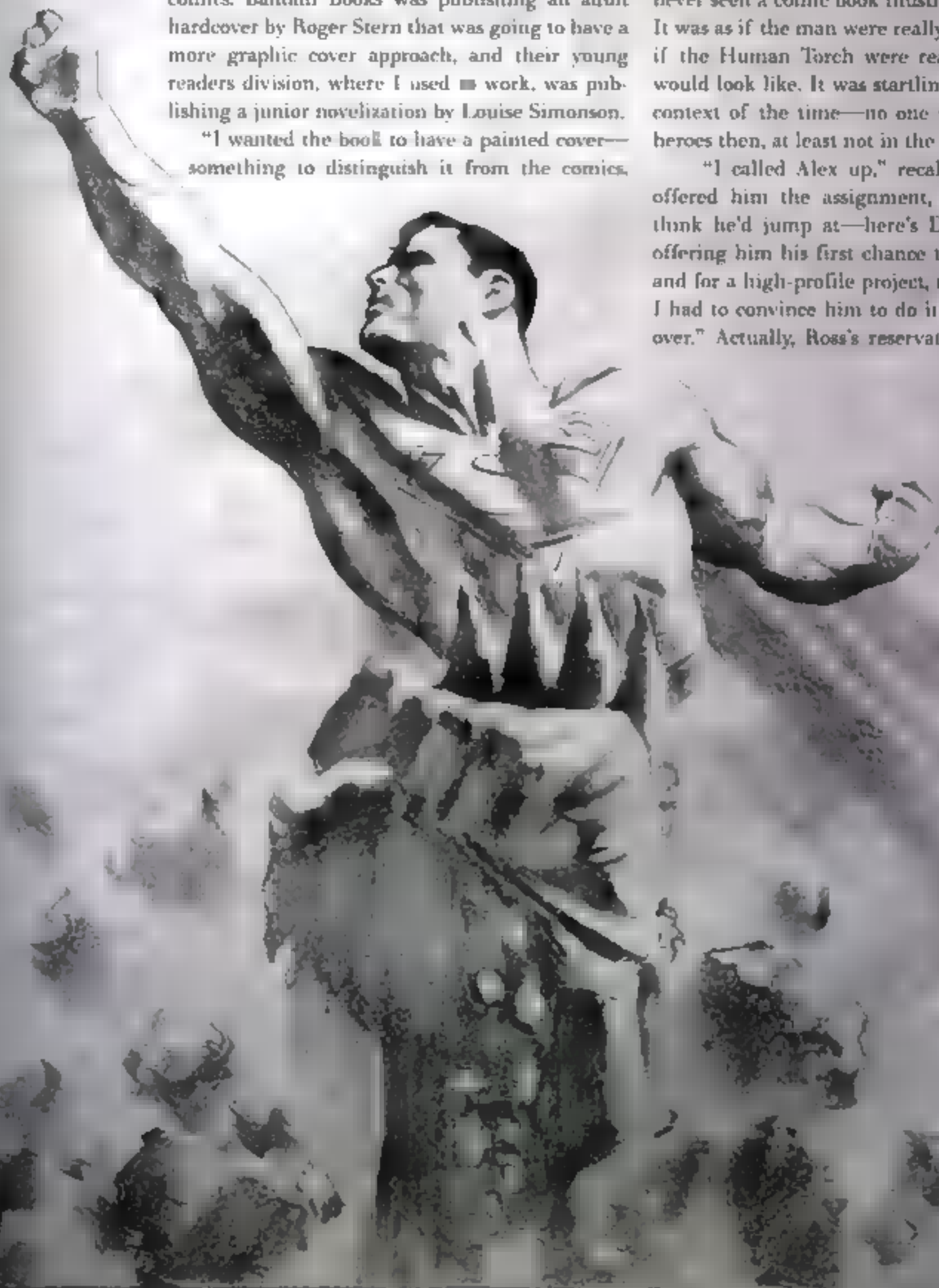


In 1993, Ross received his first commission from DC Comics. It was for an illustration of Superman, for the cover of a prose novel called *Superman: Doomsday & Beyond*. Recalls editor Charles Kochman: "I'd just started working for DC Comics in January 1993, and one of the first projects I was editing was a tie-in to the 'Death of Superman' storyline that was running in the comics. Bantam Books was publishing an adult hardcover by Roger Stern that was going to have a more graphic cover approach, and their young readers division, where I used to work, was publishing a junior novelization by Louise Simonson.

"I wanted the book to have a painted cover—something to distinguish it from the comics,

Our creative director at the time, Neal Pozner, had samples from several illustrators who he felt could do the job, and handed me a folder to look through. They were all talented, but there was something about the work of this Alex Ross guy that stood out from the others. I remember one sample in particular: The Human Torch, from a series to be published that fall called *Marvels*. I'd never seen a comic book illustration that realistic. It was as if the man were really on fire. I thought, if the Human Torch were real, this is what he would look like. It was startling, especially in the context of the time—no one was painting superheroes then, at least not in the way Alex was.

"I called Alex up," recalls Kochman, "and offered him the assignment, which you would think he'd jump at—here's DC Comics calling, offering him his first chance to draw Superman, and for a high-profile project, no less. But instead I had to convince him to do it. I had to win him over." Actually, Ross's reservations involved him





the [off] Steel with long hair [short] (ers) was Alex [catapulted] by the [set] now [to] next? [in] [Come] (an epic story [of] Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, [of] other [comm] success [of] Ross's [of] them starting with

More sketches for Superman: *Dawn of a New Day*, *The [image]*



MY FRIEND
WILL SOON
BE ROUNDING
THAT CORNER!
AND WHEN HE
DOES....!!



As I grew
older, I
discovered...



I could
defy
gravity.

I could run faster
than anything
created by man.



My strength was
tremendous and my
body invulnerable
to harm.



I became a
reporter, able to
walk among men
and be nearby
when needed.



In times of trouble,
I am there as...

That didn't last long—they do. Superman was created in the first place, then all newsstands had to have Superman. The 1938 brainchild of the Jewish immigrant from Cleveland, Ohio, the Man of Steel is the first and greatest of what the twentieth century deemed "superheroes." Writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster's creation was nothing less than the Golem of their time—an alien, invulnerable being brought into our world to solve our problems, and to save our lives.

In this sense, Superman was also the most logical step by providing him in what appears to be actual flesh and blood. Alex was not the first to do so—movie, TV, and radio shows have been portraying Superman almost since his conception. And pulp magazines of the 1920s and 30s—the genre that led to comic books—traditionally had fully painted covers. But what makes this approach unique to Superman and the other DC characters is twofold. First, on the page we always weren't used to seeing them this way. Second, it wasn't just that we saw them; eventually, it was as if now we were allowed to really see them for the first time. The effect was like finally meeting someone you'd only ever heard about.

RIGHT: Superman takes off to a galaxy far, far away on the lenticular cover of *Superman Forever* #1 (June 1998).
OPPOSITE, TOP: Siegel and Shuster's original creation, from a 1938 Sunday newspaper supplement.
OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: A dramatic two-page splash of Superman, painted by Ross Andru for *Peace on Earth* (1998).

SUPERMAN.



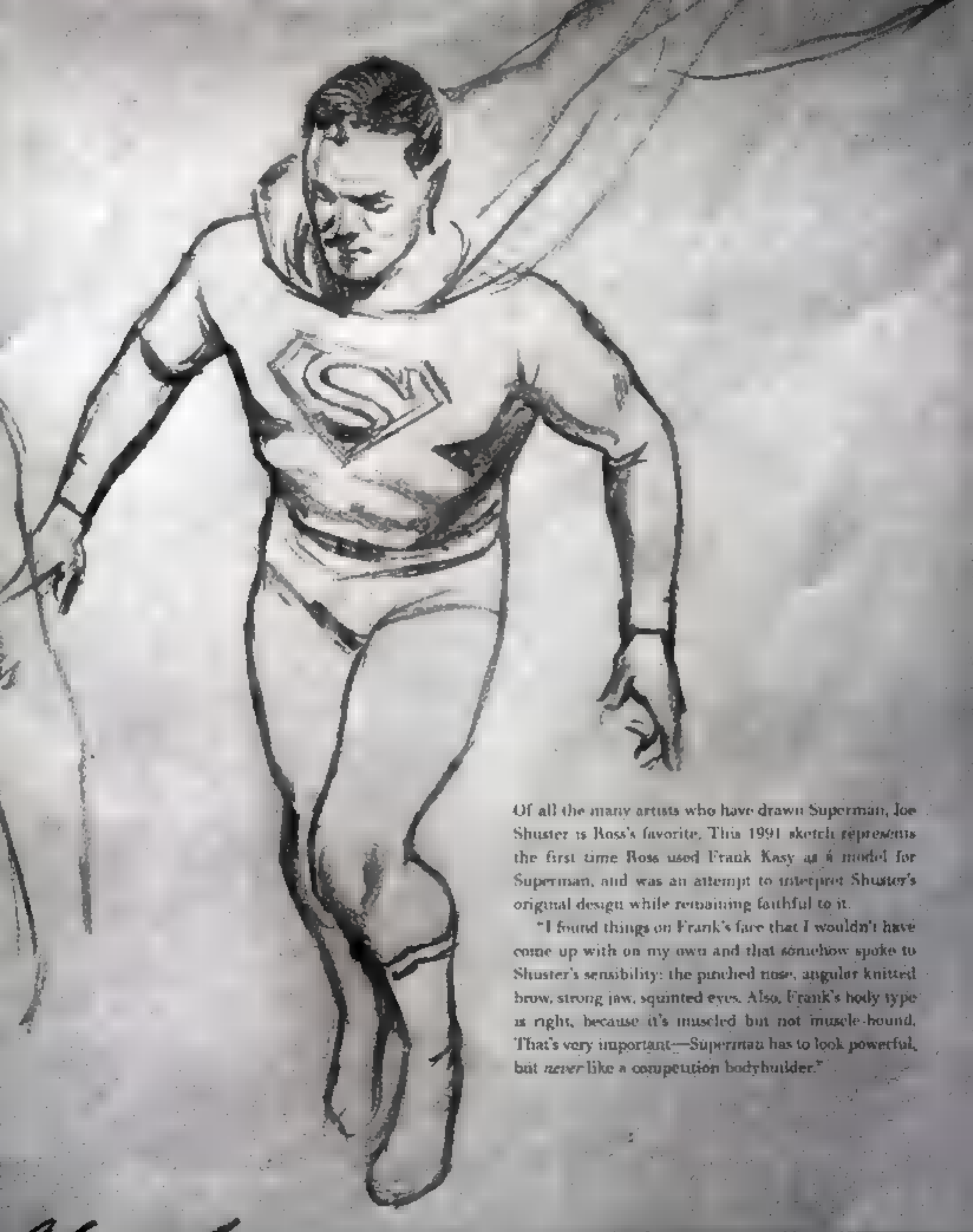


THE CROWNING



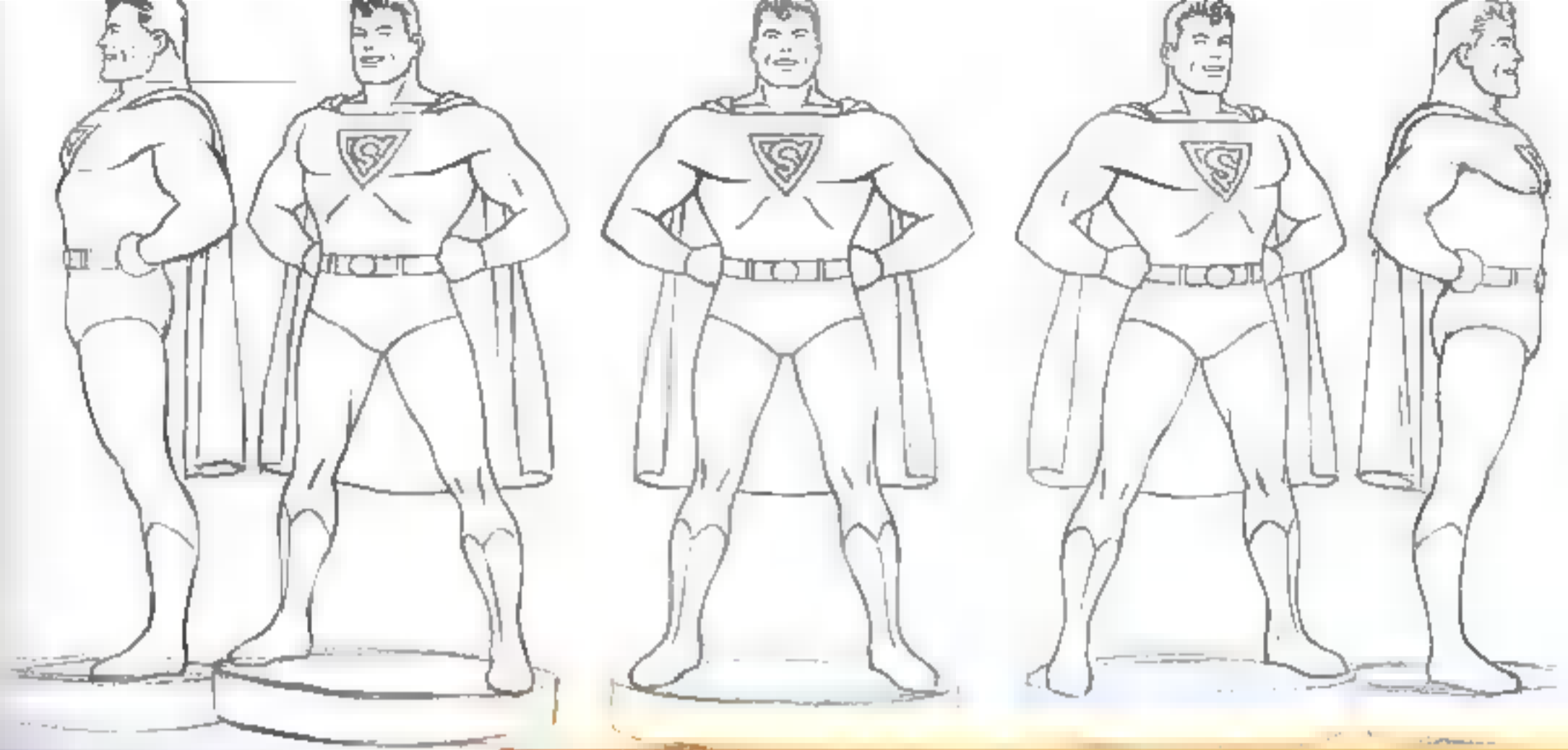
BELOW: A re-creation of Joe Shuster's cover (opposite, lower right) of *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938). OPPOSITE, TOP: Detail of a 1991 (1992) sketch of Superman's head.
LOWER LEFT: Pen-and-ink study of Clark Kent changing into Superman, to be used for a lenticular cover of *Superman Forever* #1 (June 1998).





Of all the many artists who have drawn Superman, Joe Shuster is Ross's favorite. This 1991 sketch represents the first time Ross used Frank Kazy as a model for Superman, and was an attempt to interpret Shuster's original design while remaining faithful to it.

"I found things on Frank's face that I wouldn't have come up with on my own and that somehow spoke to Shuster's sensibility: the pinched nose, angular knitted brow, strong jaw, squinted eyes. Also, Frank's body type is right, because it's muscled but not muscle-bound. That's very important—Superman has to look powerful, but *never* like a competition bodybuilder."



This 1998 pencil study was proposed for a Warner Bros. Studio Store lithograph but went unproduced. The deceptively simple device of tilting the cityscape is what makes Superman actually seem to be flying. "When you tilt the horizon line, you create a sense of vertigo—we're not watching the moment, we're IN the moment. The element of movement is extenuated."



OPPOSITE. This 1998 lithograph, sold through the Warner Bros. Studio Stores, is Ross's interpretation of the classic cover of *Superman #1* (Summer 1939) by Joe Shuster (below), and evokes the cityscape photographs of Barnice Abbott. McEwan was disappointed that he wasn't able to retain the original's oval design, seen in his pencil study to the right. He also isn't happy with the rendering of Superman's head. "I'd redo it if I could. It's too small, and doesn't look naturalistic. Also, he should be more silhouetted. And—oh, don't get me started..."



SUPERMAN

64
PAGES
OF
ACTION!

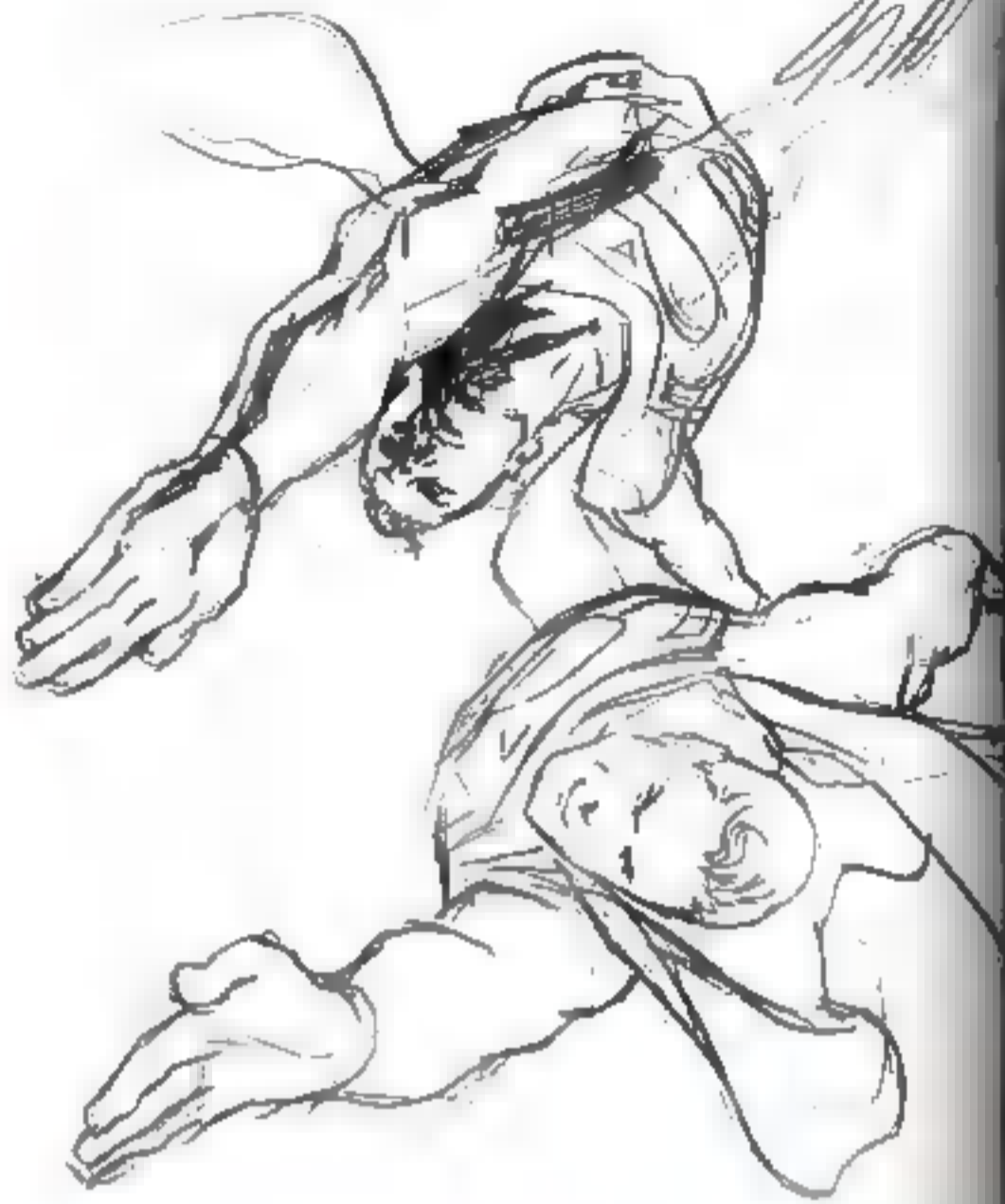
ALL
IN
FULL
COLOR

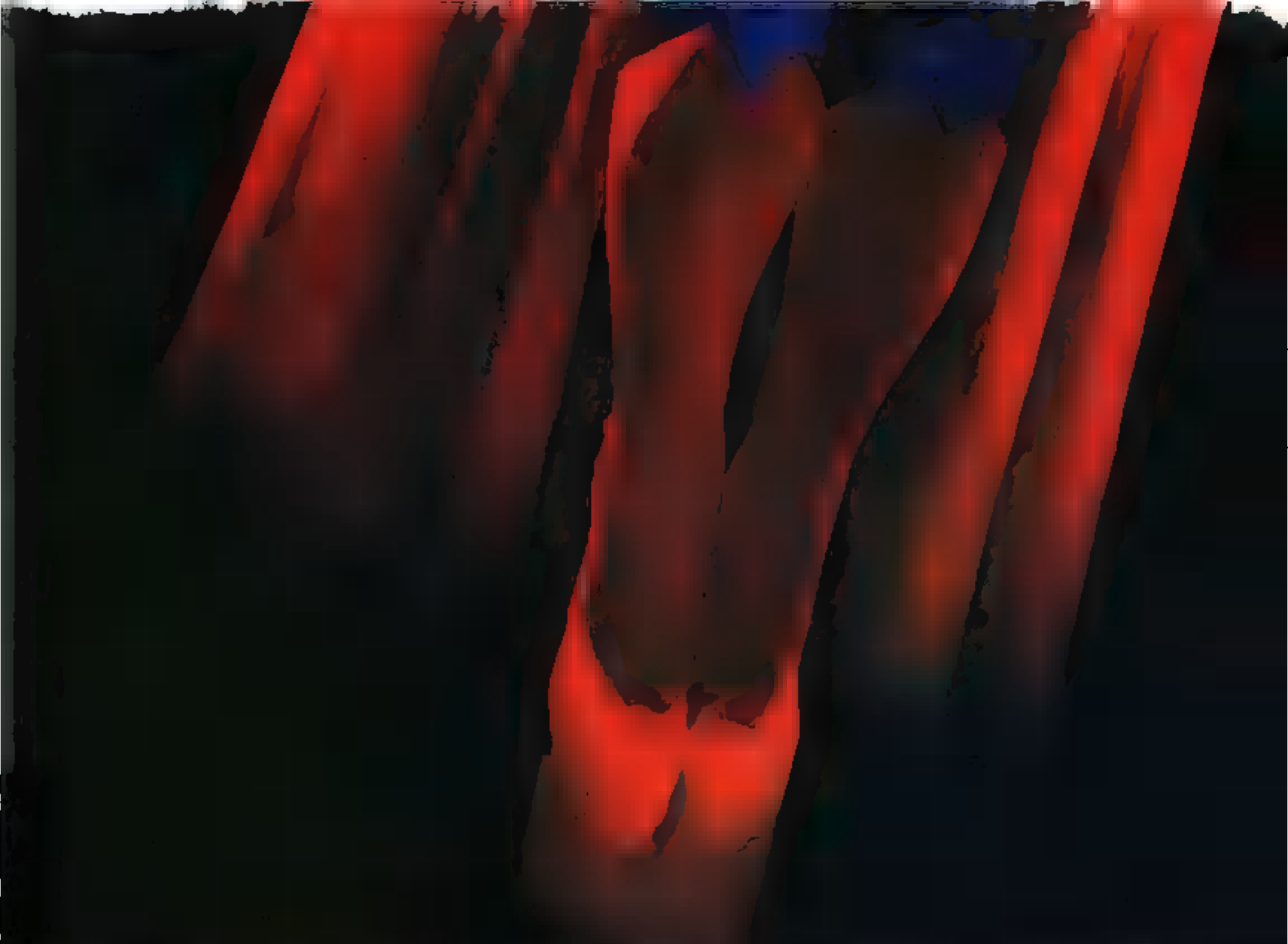
THE COMPLETE STORY OF THE DARING
EXPLOITS OF THE ONE AND ONLY
SUPERMAN





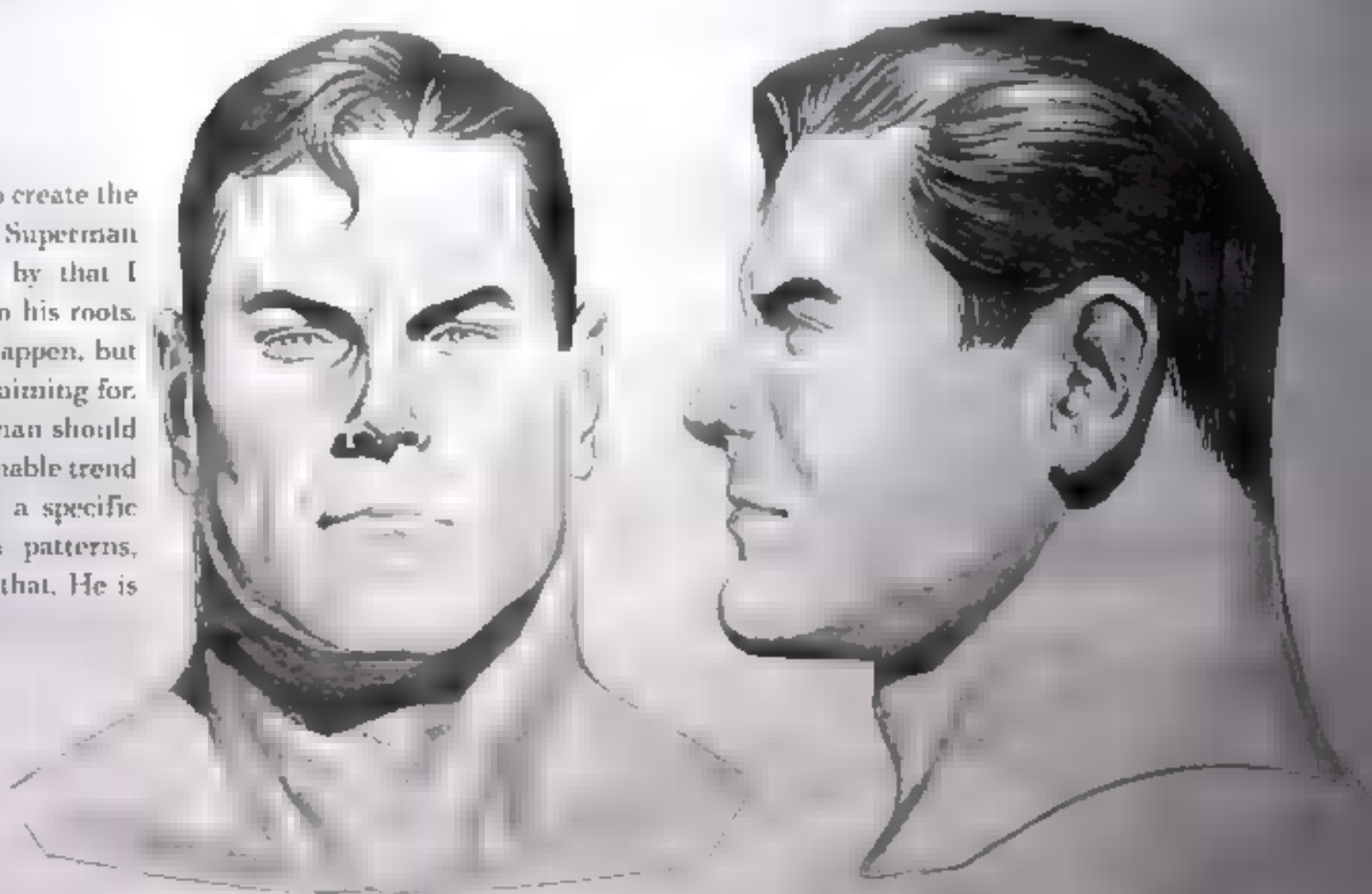
ABOVE: The back cover of *Superman* #139 (1939) featured this iconic Joe Shuster illustration of Superman breaking chains, which Koss recreated (below right) for the back cover of *Superman: Complete History* (Chronicle Books, 1998). OPPOSITE PAGE: Superman takes refuge in her... subsequence of paintings for the Jetticular cover of *Superman Forever!* (June 1998). BOTTOM: Superman pencil sketches for video game (1999). RIGHT AND BOTTOM LEFT: Thumbnail sketches for *Superman: Peacocks Earth*.

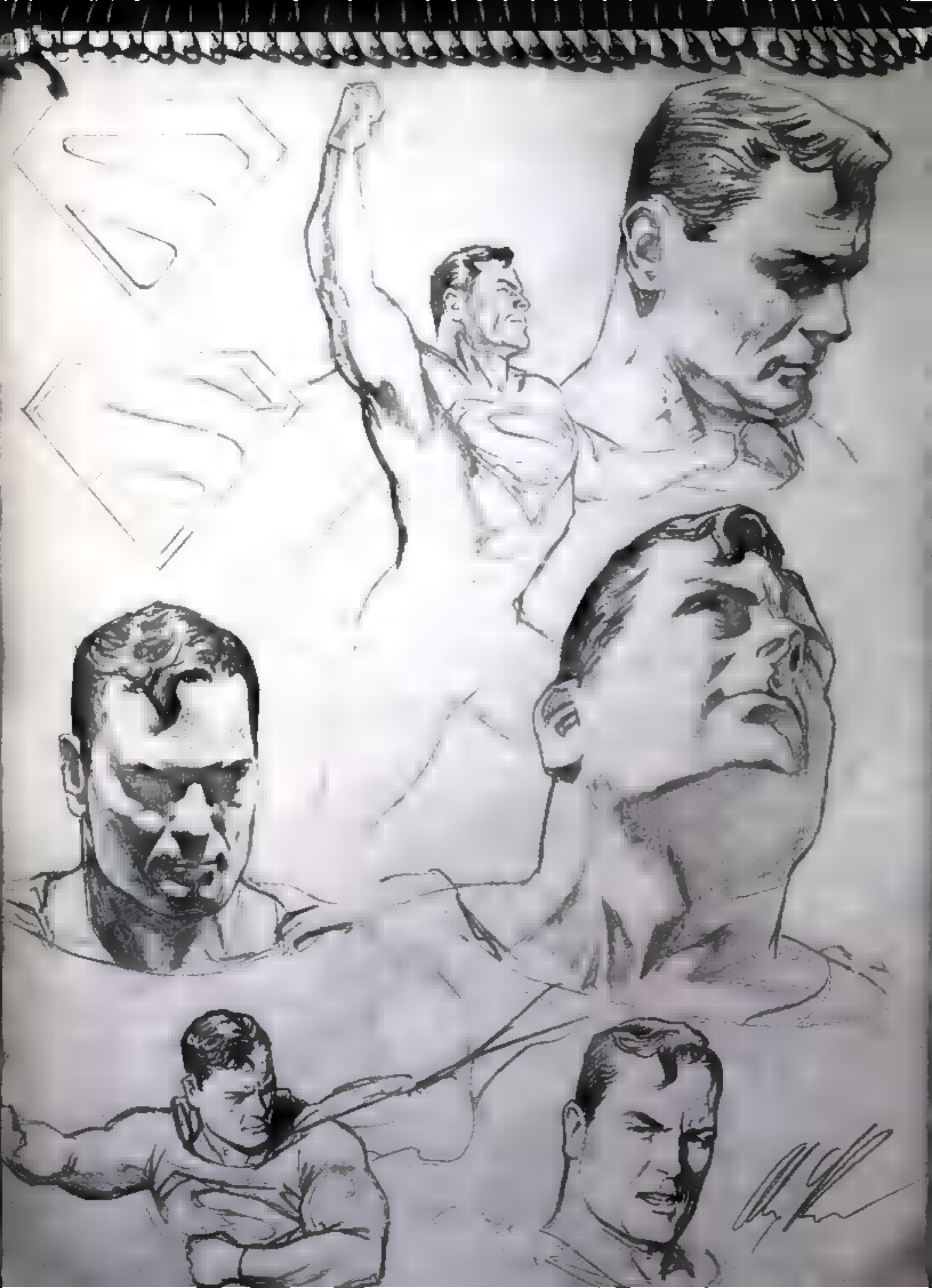


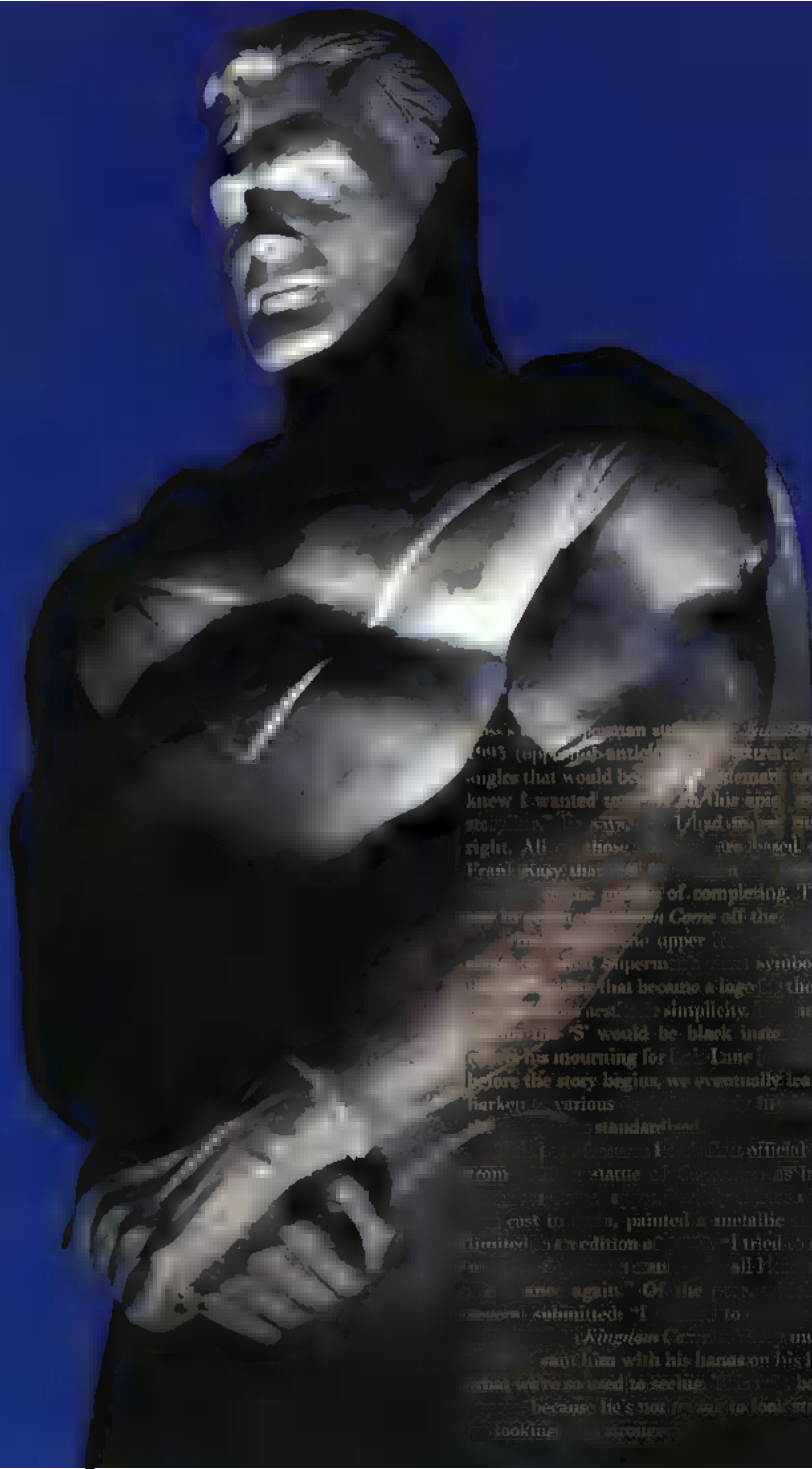


SUPERMAN HEAD "URNS

"I very much wanted to create the new standard by which Superman should be drawn, and by that I mean: take him back to his roots. Of course that didn't happen, but it was definitely worth aiming for. He deserves it. Superman should never reflect any fashionable trend or other affectation of a specific era—hairstyle, speech patterns, etcetera. He is beyond that. He is out of time."







...the man who... *Kingdom Come*...
...1993...
...angles that would be...
...knew I wanted to...
...story...
...right. All of these...
...Frank Kelly...
...of completing. This...
...Come off the...
...upper...
...superman... symbol would look...
...that became a logo...
...simplicity. The...
...the 'S' would be black...
...his mourning for...
...before the story begins, we eventually learn...
...harken to various...
...standard...
...statue of Superman...
...cast in... painted a metallic...
...edition of... "I tried to...
...again." Of the...
...submitted. "I...
...Kingdom... much humbled...
...with his hands on his hips...
...we're so used to seeing... because he's...
...because he's not... to look strong, he...
...looking... stronger.

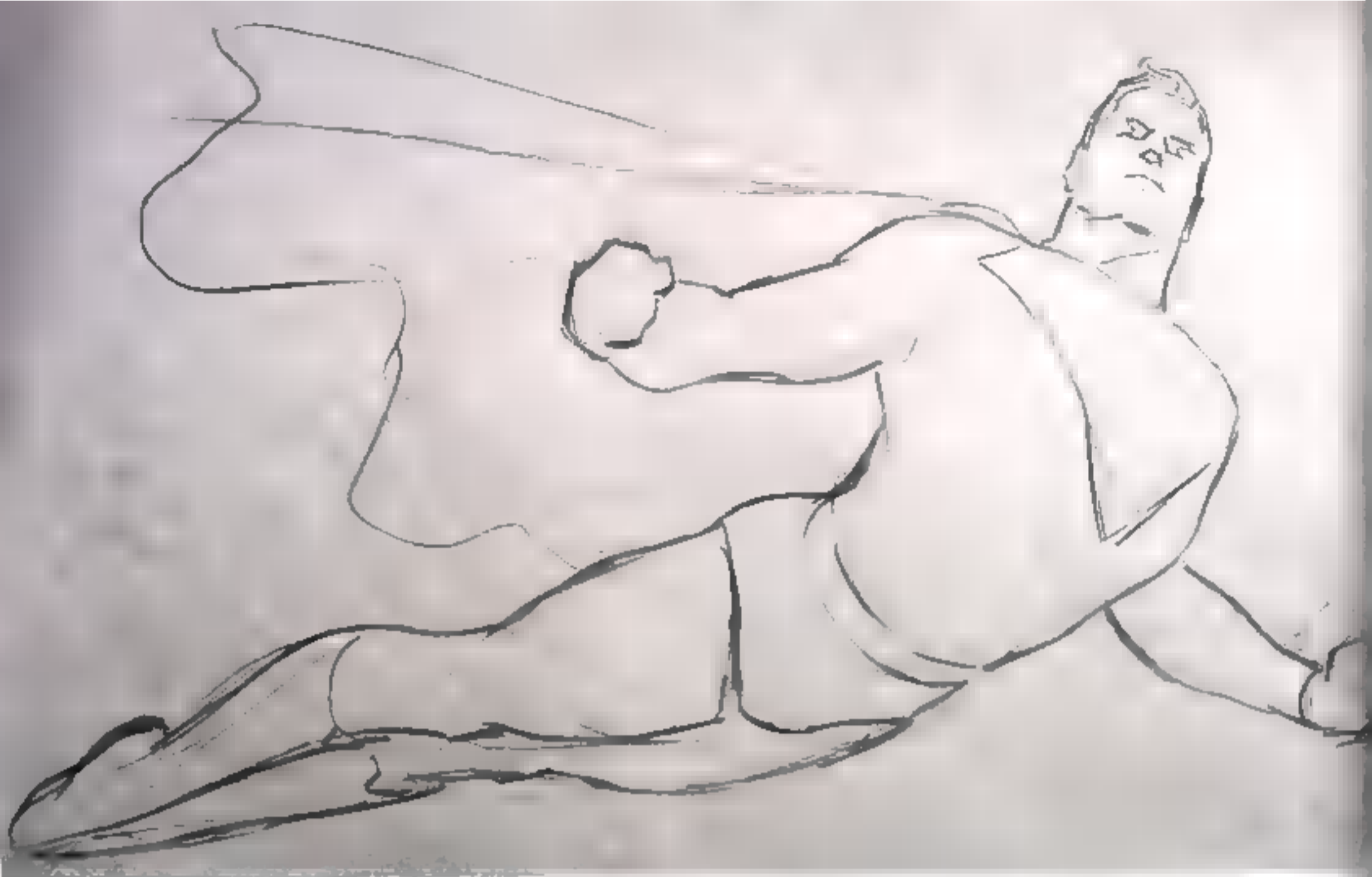


This painting was created in 1978 for use as a "life size" cardboard display for comic book shops. "I was trying to relate the image of great power through a modest mentality. That's what Superman should be. So how do you do that? By keeping the hands together and pointed outward, keeping the hands in fists but relatively relaxed and at his sides, his chin straight up. The key is that the cape does all his talking for him - it creates a flamboyant sense of grandeur that he doesn't have to."

OPPOSITE: Superman studies
Kingdom Come (1993).



[Handwritten signature]



ABOVE: A sketch and final painting for the title page of *Superman: Battle on Earth*. Ross's re-creation of the classic cover for *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man* (1976), marking the first time Marvel and DC Comics characters appeared together in a story. "A national pop culture milestone of my youth," says Ross. "The grandiosity of the format [10" x 14"] was overwhelming, as if the story itself said 'This needs to be this large.' DC and Marvel put their differences aside and their finest talent forward. I think it was the best thing those involved ever did." The original cover, on the lower left, is by Carmine Infantino, John Andru, and Dick Giordano. Ross was careful not to alter it. "When painting this [for *Wizard* #9, January 1999], I didn't want to put my spin on it or change anything."

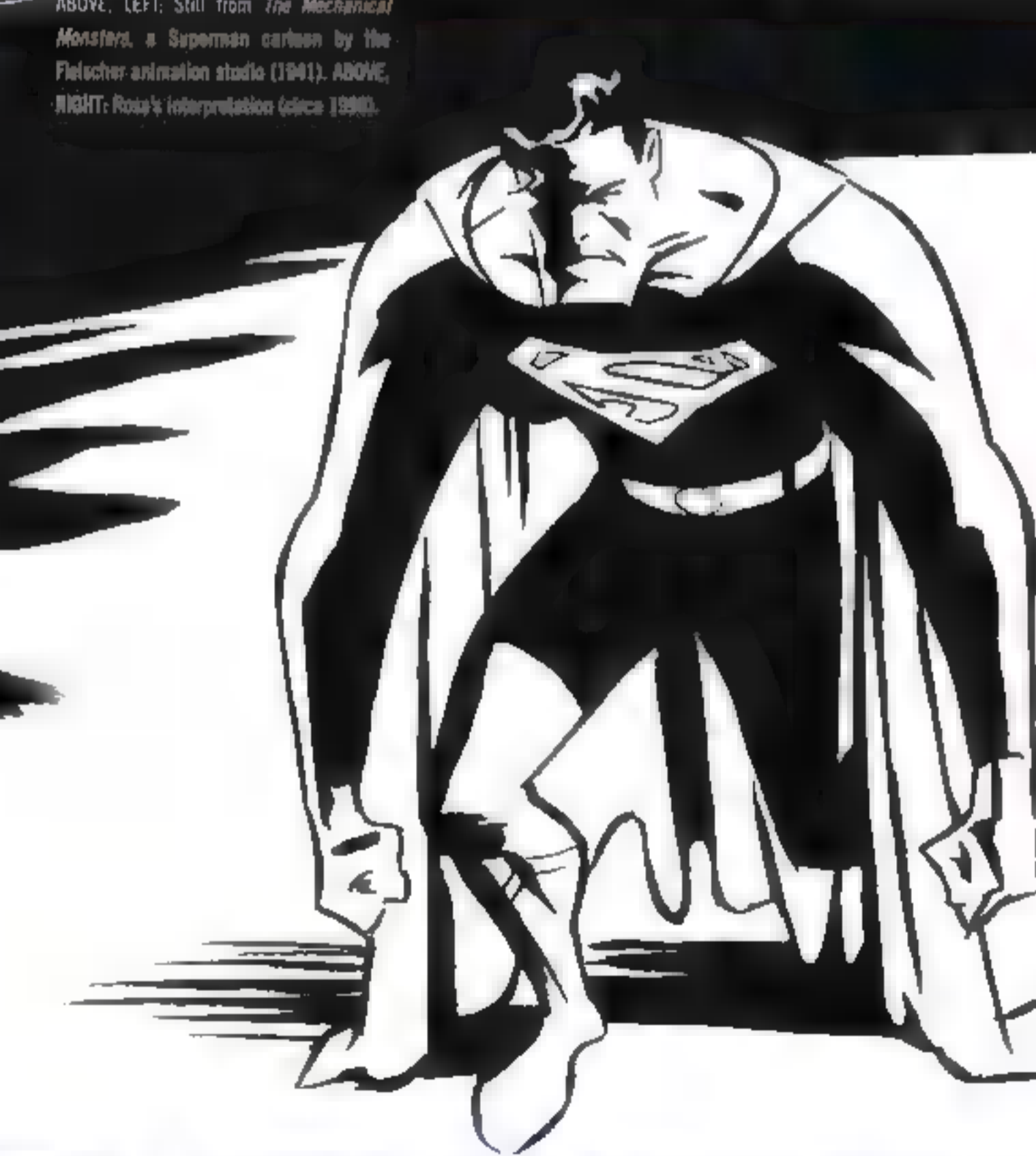








ABOVE, LEFT: Still from *The Mechanical Monsters*, a Superman cartoon by the Fleischer animation studio (1941). ABOVE, RIGHT: Ross's interpretation (circa 1990).



The seventeen Superman cartoon shorts by Max and Dave Fleischer produced between the years 1941-46 made a tremendous impression on Ross. "I first saw those cartoons as a teenager in Chicago. Friends at Columbia College got me access to their video library. I was pre-occupied—the Fleishers crystallized the character in my mind. For example, the squinted Superman's eyes wasn't because he had attitude, it was because he was doing something that involved tremendous exertion. There's one scene in *The Mechanical Monsters* when he takes off and the movement is so natural you feel like you're lifted into the sky with him. Somehow the movies haven't been able to capture. And another where he's fighting an army of robots and he's winning *and* losing the battle—it's not effortless in any way, that sense of struggle is so important. Those cartoons changed me."

The line drawing above and those on the following pages are exercises inspired by the work of animator Bruce Timm, who developed his reductive, angular style to make the characters easier to animate. "Bruce and I became friends in 1994," says Ross. "I've always greatly admired his work—

the energy, the economy of line. I did these drawings in 1997 for a proposed 'animated style' one-shot comic (to be written by Paul Dini) that would have involved Superman meeting Captain Marvel. Instead *Peace on Earth* took over, and this project got put on the shelf."





Superman surveys Metropolis from the top of the Daily Planet Building in his streamlined art style cover of *Superman Adventures* #58 (August 2001). The comic book was a tie-in to the *Superman* animated TV series of the late-1990s. The sleek style here is inspired by the show's art style.
Bruce Timm

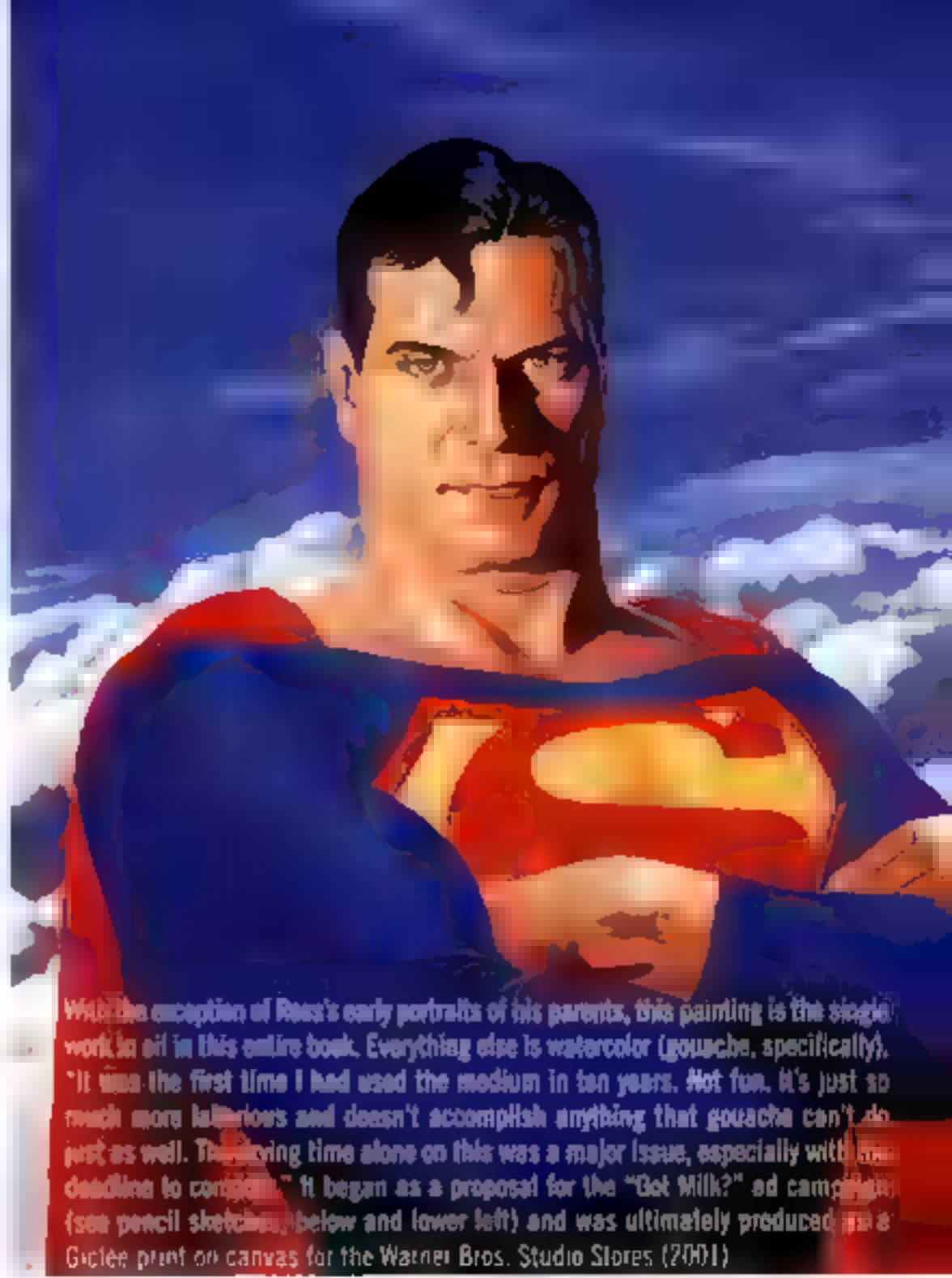




ABOVE: Christopher Reeve as Superman for the cover of the San Diego Comic-Con book convention program (August 1996).



THIS IS MY FIRST
DRAFT - IF ANY
FOR THE VAN DYCK CAN BE
IT SET HANDS A GOOD PIECE
CONJUNCTION WITH THE GRAPHIC NOVEL



With the exception of Ross's early portraits of his parents, this painting is the single work in oil in this entire book. Everything else is watercolor (gouache, specifically). "It was the first time I had used the medium in ten years. Not fun. It's just so much more laborious and doesn't accomplish anything that gouache can't do just as well. The drying time alone on this was a major issue, especially with the deadline to complete." It began as a proposal for the "Got Milk?" ad campaign (see pencil sketches below and lower left) and was ultimately produced as a Giclee print on canvas for the Warner Bros. Studio Stores (2001)

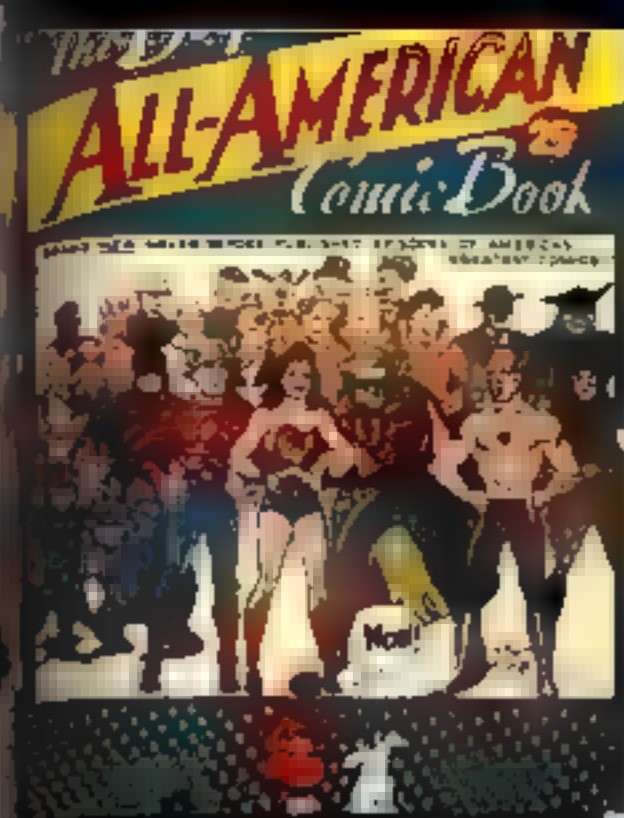


TO BOTH FOR
APPROVAL

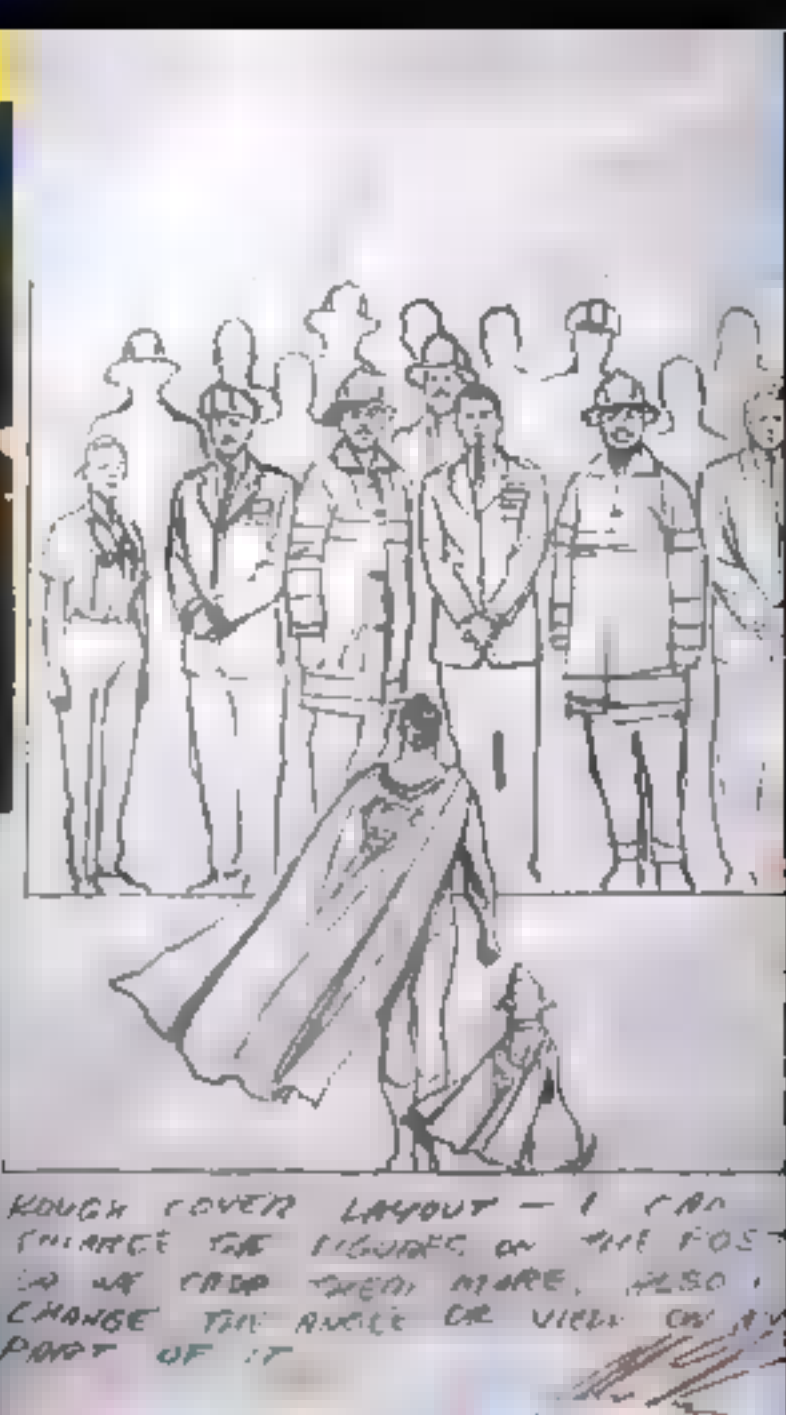




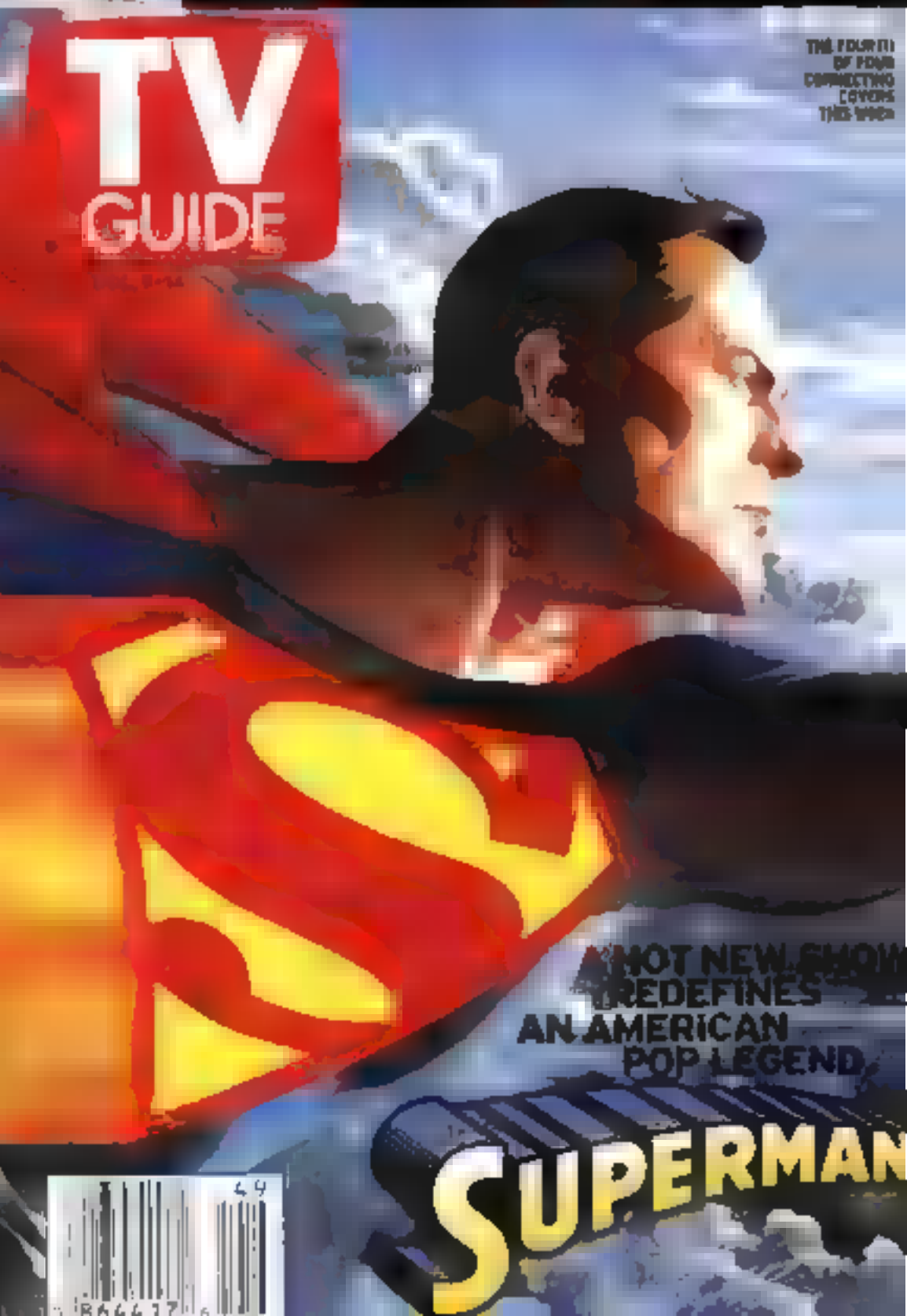
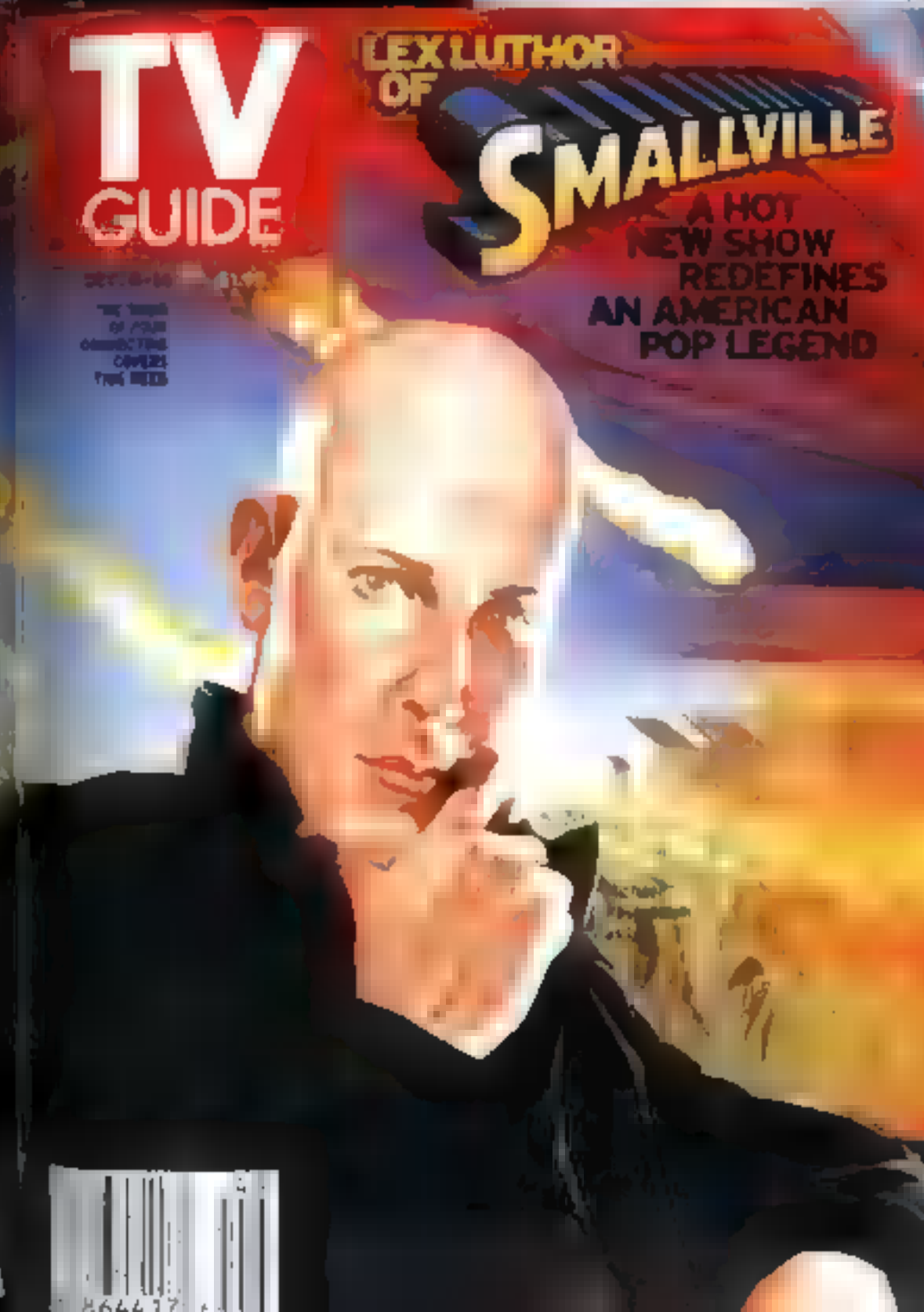
ABOVE: Alex was so taken with a classic Superman moment by artist Joe Shuster (Action Comics #1, June 1938) he re-created it twice—once as a periodical work in the early 1950's (left), and again for a 1998 lithograph (right) that was included with the Warner Bros. Studio Stores edition of *Superman: The Complete History* (Chronicle Books, 1996). "I was so gripped by this as a historical comics moment. Lois Lane doesn't know anything about Superman yet and fears the worst."



ABOVE: The classic cover of *The Big All-American Comic Book #1* (1944) provided the inspiration for the cover (right) of the 9-11 benefit anthology (2002). BELOW: This set of four TV Guide covers from 2001 features the *Smallville* TV show. "This was a very pleasant project to do, and it went very smoothly. The show is great—it has a strong spiritual connection to the character that I totally identify with."



ROUGH COVER LAYOUT - I CAN ENLARGE THE FIGURES ON THE POSTER WE CAN ADD MORE. ALSO, CHANGE THE ANGLE OR VIEW ON ANY PART OF IT



THE FOURTH OF FOUR CONNECTING COVERS THIS WEEK



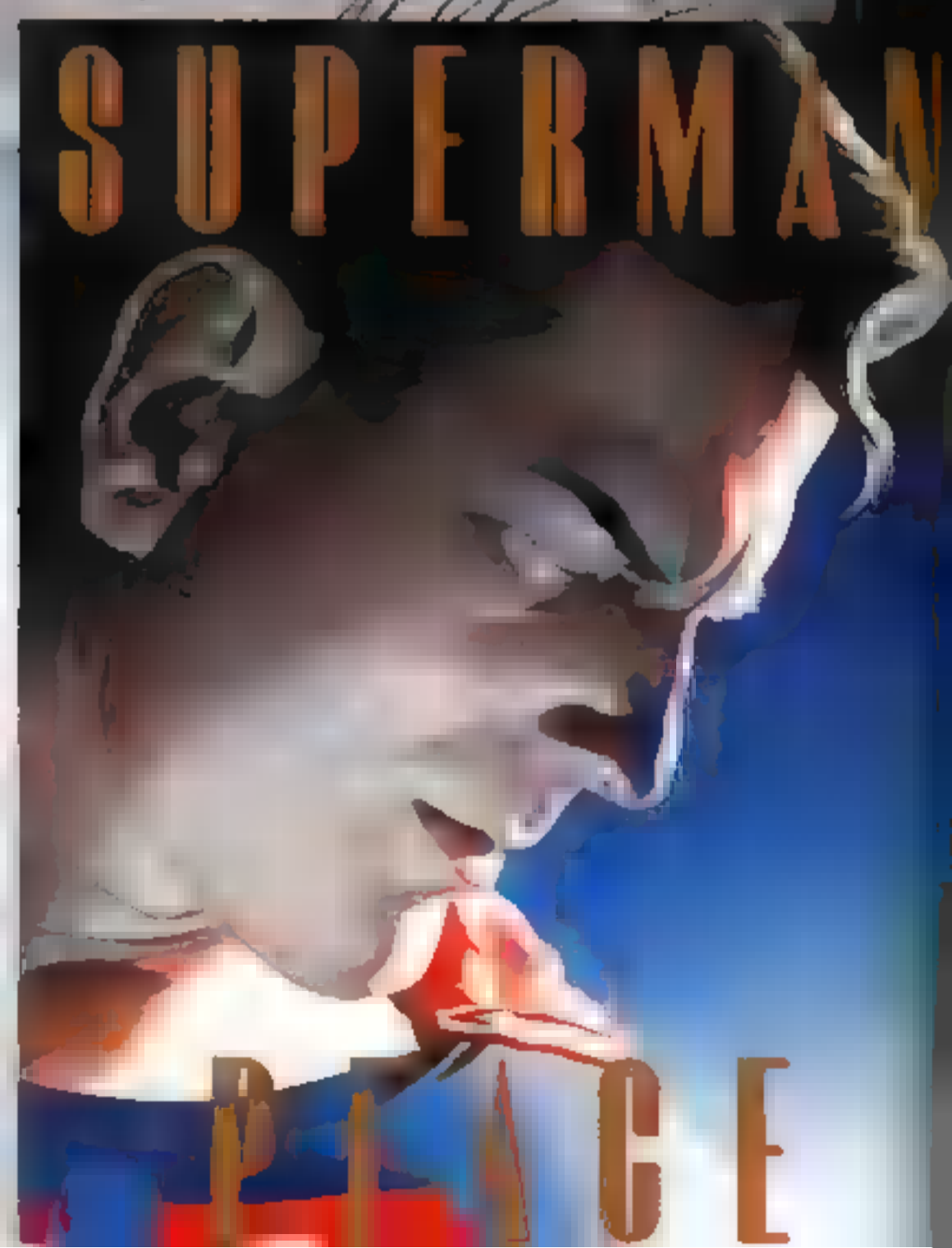
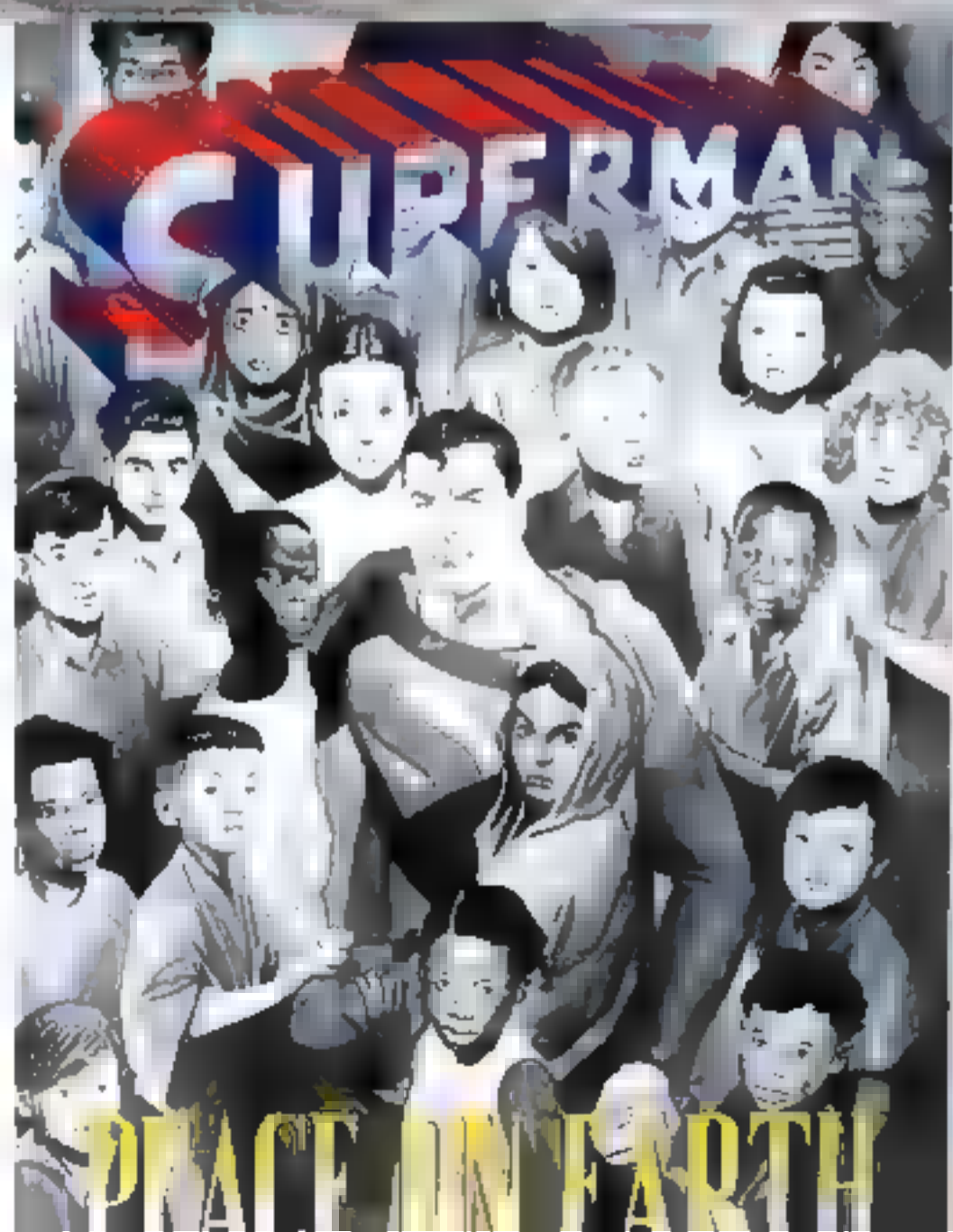
LEFT: Ross's first sketches and notes for what would become known as the "tabloid book" (1997). BELOW LEFT: An early cover concept for *Peace on Earth* (1998). BELOW RIGHT: The final cover of *Peace on Earth* (1998).

DC COMICS CELEBRATES 60 YEARS OF THE GREATEST ARCHETYPES OF THE MEDIUM.

THESE WERE THE FIRST.

- 1998 SUPERMAN: PEACE ON EARTH
- 1999 BATMAN
- 2000 SHAZAM!: MONSTER SOCIETY
- 2001 WONDER WOMAN

"When Alex and I first started working together in 1993," recalls DC Comics editor Charles Kochman, "he and I talked about collaborating on a project, perhaps a series. We wanted to do something that wasn't quite a comic, more of an all-ages picture book that harkened back to the tabloids we had grown up reading. The stories would be self-contained, removed from the 'baggage' of continuity, and deal with the essence of the heroes and how they would deal with problems in our 'real' world. Working with editor Joey Cavaliere, *Superman: Peace on Earth* was born."



PEACE ON EARTH.

Superman: Peace on Earth, with text by Rossmore and artwork by Paul Fier, tells a story of how the Man of Steel might try to combat the planet's hunger problem, a scenario that harkens back to the 1940s, when Siegel and Shuster routinely produced stories about Superman fighting in World War II.

That was then, however, and some battles are more decisively won than others. In the end, despite all his best intentions, Superman is no match for third-world political corruption, isolationist mistrust, and global fear of an ultra-concentrated superpower. Sound familiar?

And so, he fails miserably. But Ross did not. With the release of the book, he auctioned off all its original art through Sotheby's, with proceeds donated to UNICEF and Harper House in Chicago. A staggering \$50,000 was raised. "In *Peace on Earth*," says Kochman, "Superman realizes that he can't solve all of the world's problems, and that he must lead by example. With the auctions [one for each issue], that's what Alex tried to do. He put his money where his mouth is. It was a very generous gesture."

"Paul was committed to the task this project proposed," says Ross. "He has an innate understanding of these scenarios and their spiritual engines. He doesn't let the material get absurd or tongue-in-cheek, which is very important to me. He is also a damn fine writer."



"The problem," Pa used to say, "is people. As far back as we can remember we've always had problems with our neighbors. Seems everyone's too busy worrying about what they've got to do for themselves to care how their neighbors are doing."





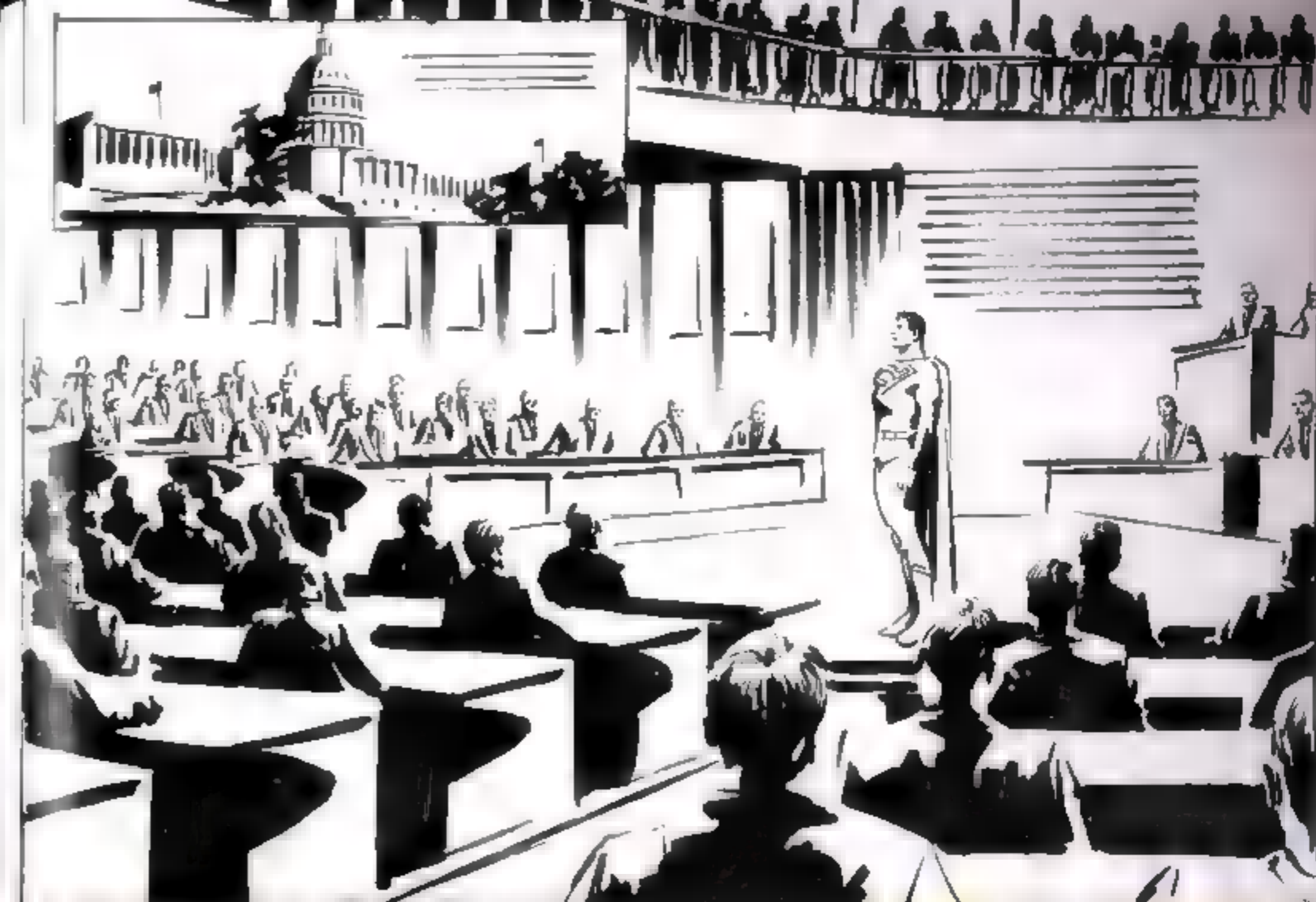
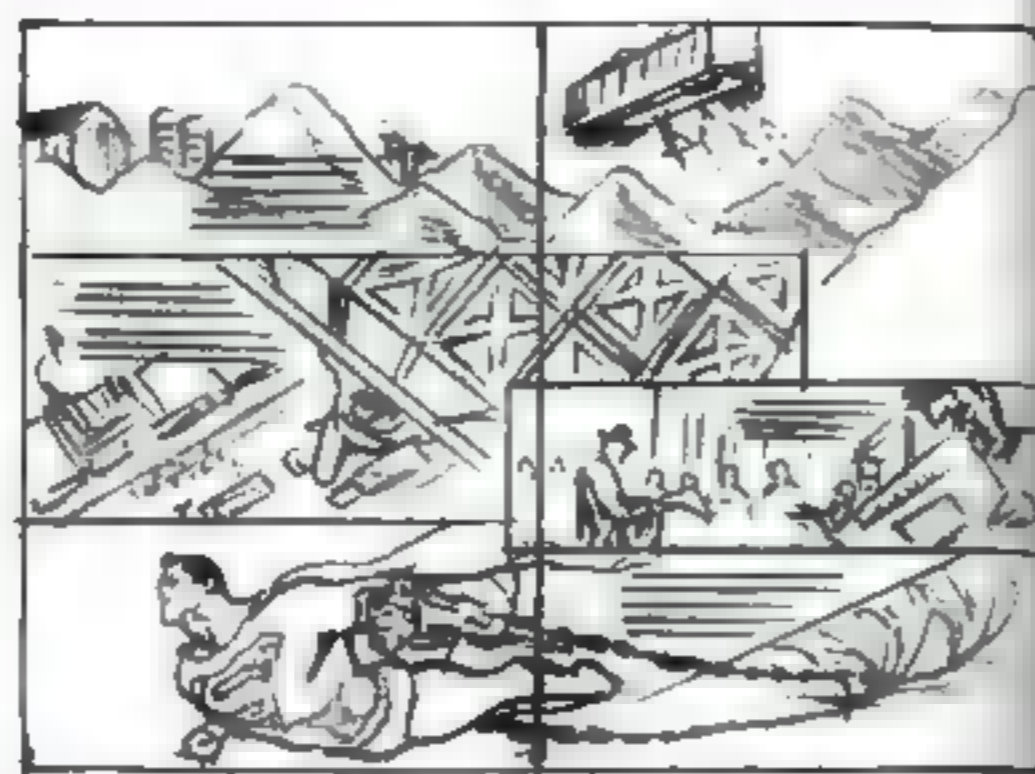
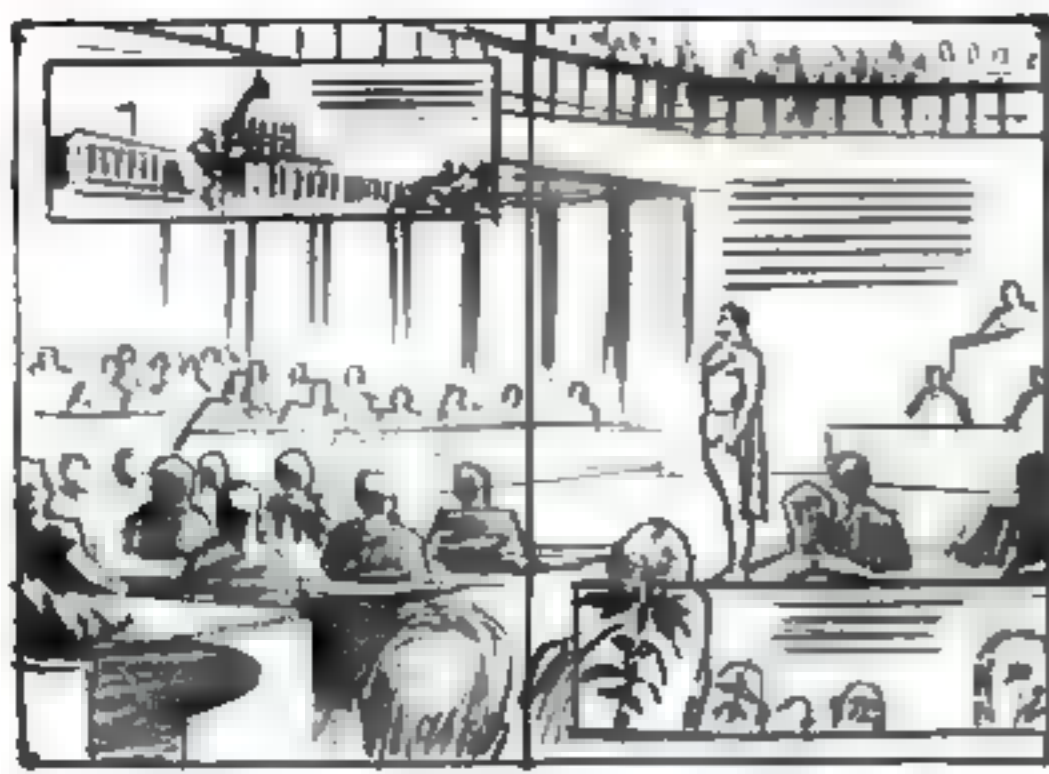
THIS EXAMPLE SHOWS A MORE INTERRUPTED FLOW OF PANEL ARRANGEMENT AND SOME VIGNETTES NOT BRACKETED BY PANEL SHAPES, ALLOWING THEM TO FLOW INTO ONE ANOTHER.

THE SCENE SIMPLY TRIES TO OFFER SOME IDEAS OF HOW SUPERMAN MIGHT TRY TO REACH OUT TO PEOPLE ON THE HOLIDAYS.









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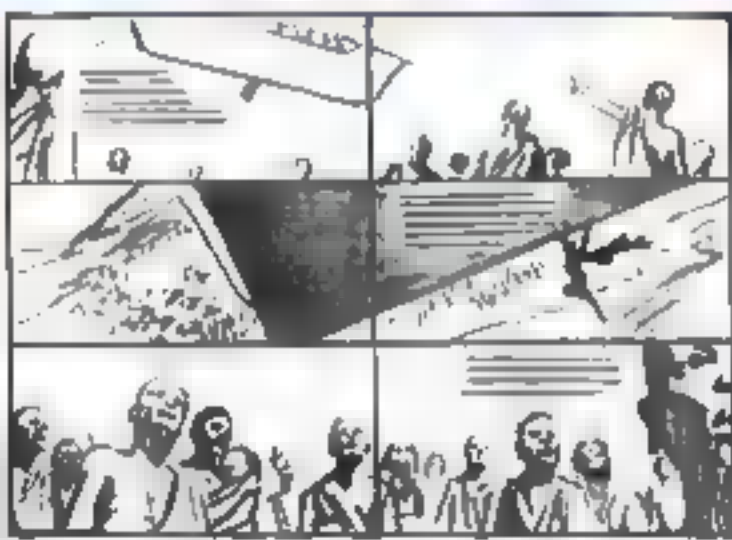
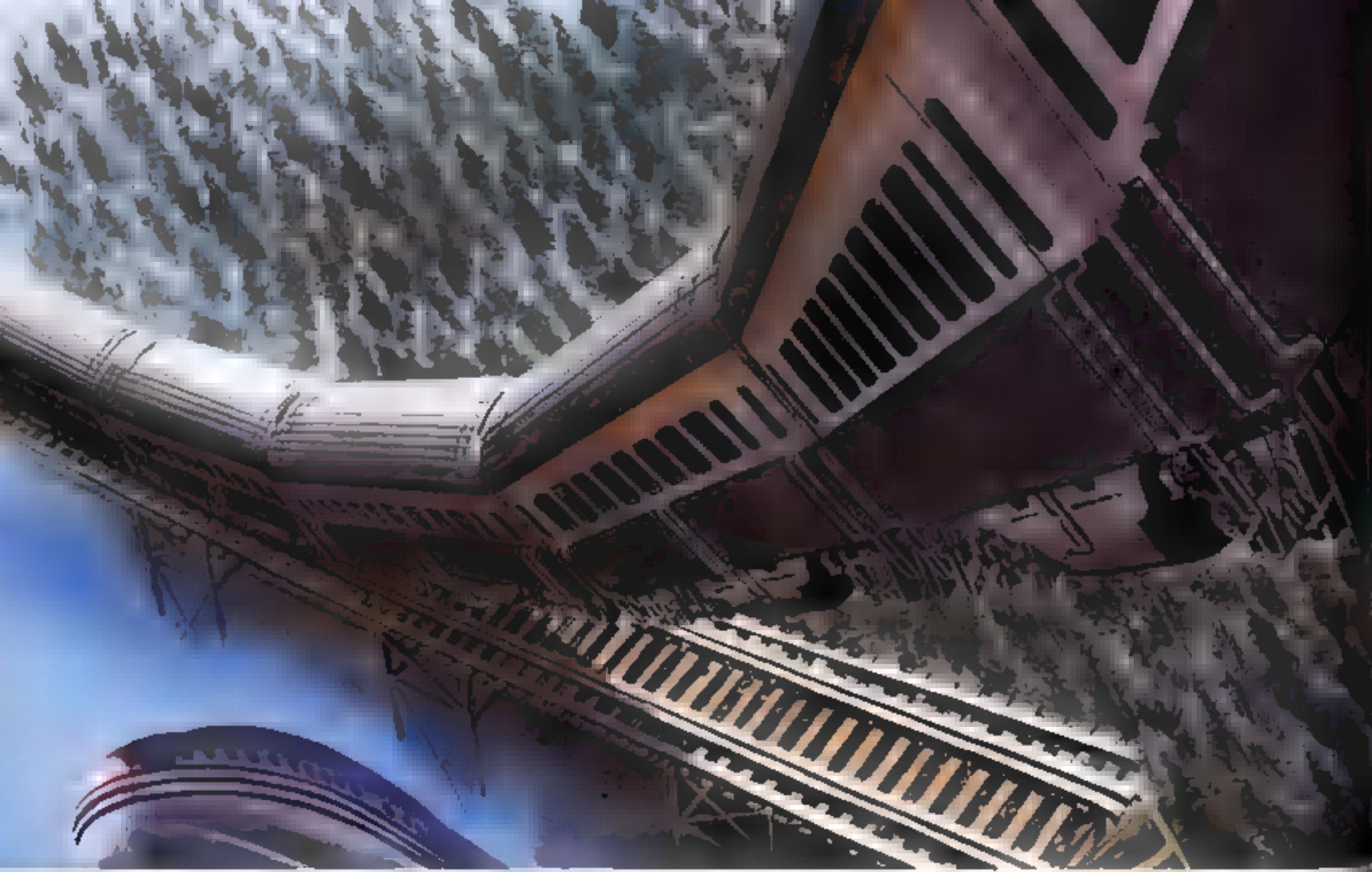
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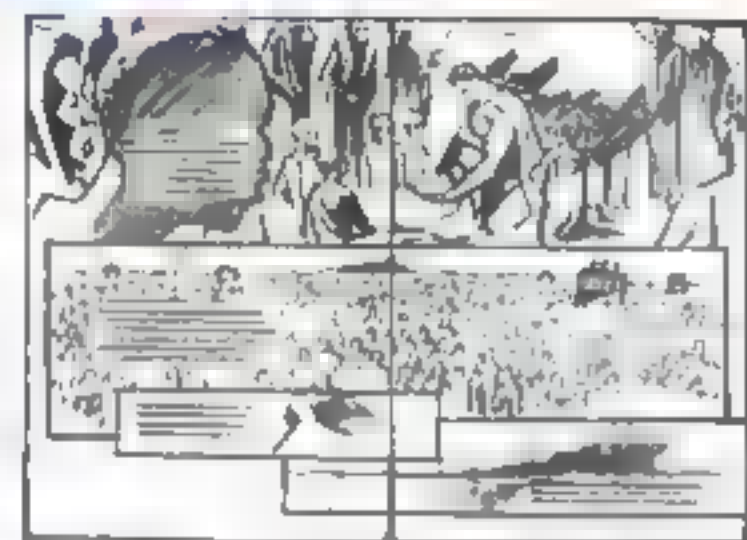
THIS IS MOSTLY A SPREAD WITH ONE PANEL INTERSECTING, SETTING THE LOCATION.

SUPERMAN IS SPEAKING BEFORE CONGRESS HERE, REQUESTING AID POSSIBLY IN HIS QUEST TO USE FOOD RESERVES TO FEED THE STARVING NATIONS.





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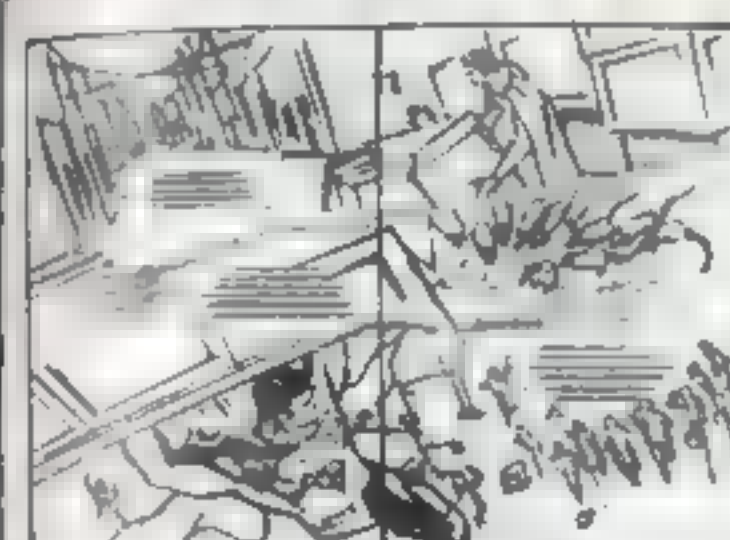


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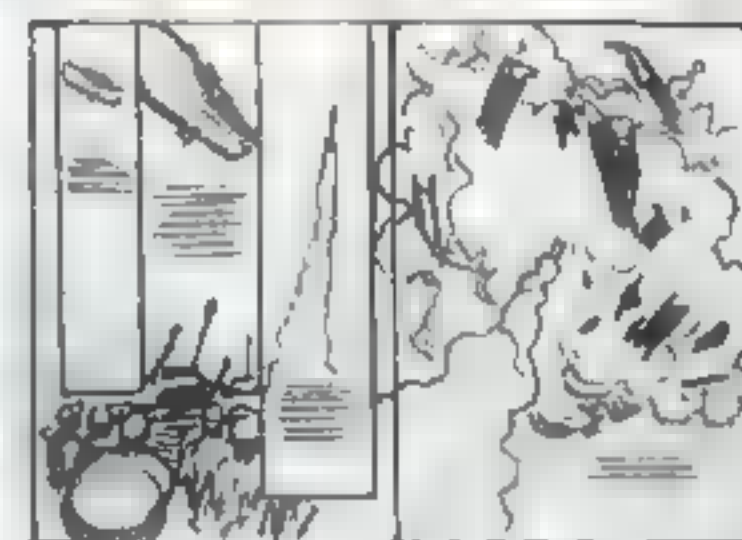
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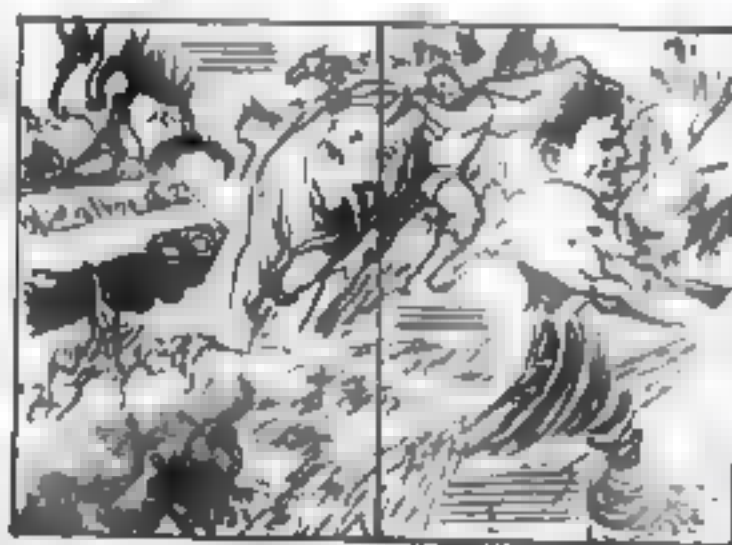
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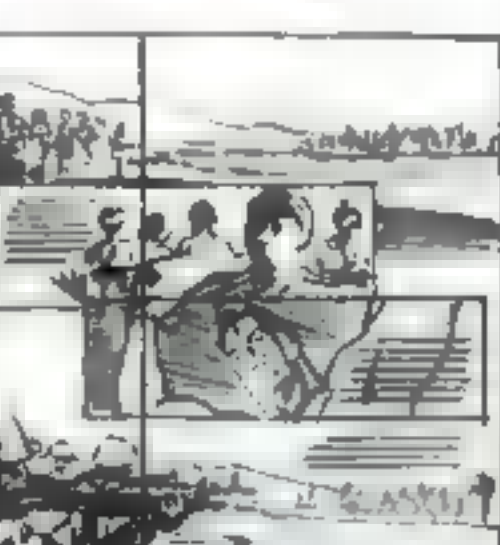


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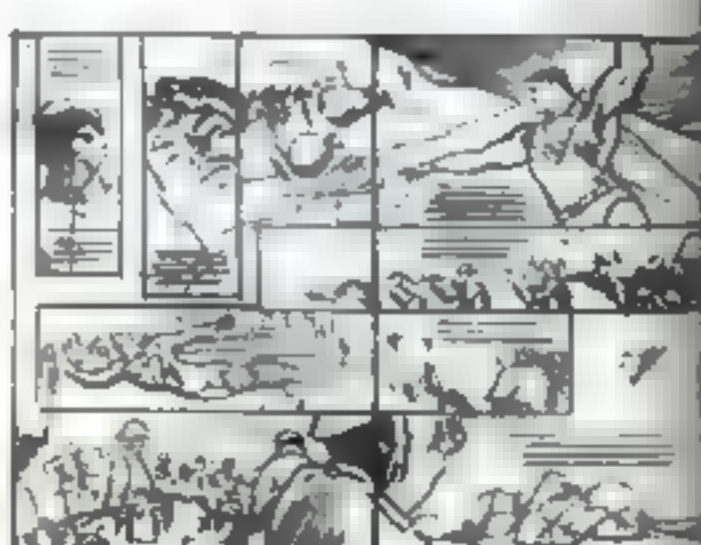


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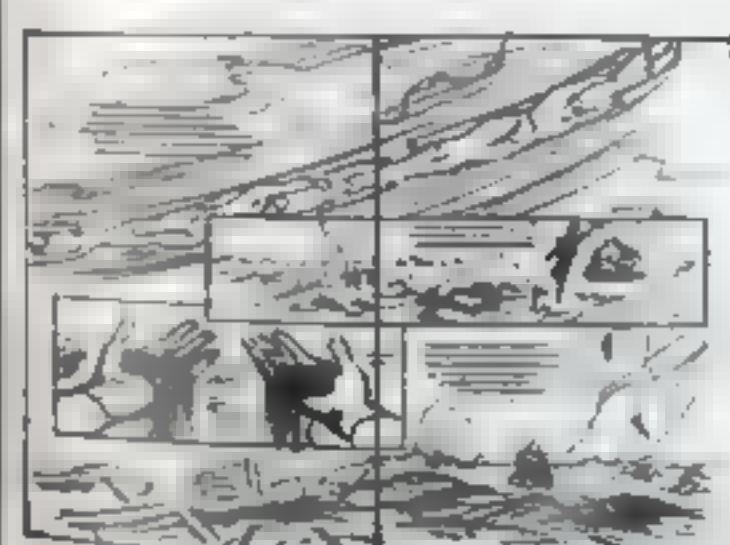


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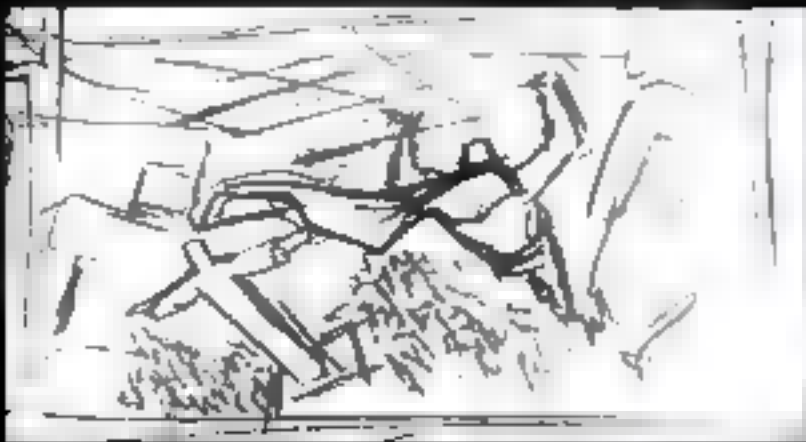
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"Superman falls short of his goal throughout the story because he is the brawn that humanity shouldn't (and doesn't) have," says Ross. "In the process of trying to save people from themselves, he ends up making them reliant on him and therefore fails. It's not something that can be

done by hand, it has to be done by example, and that's what he learns. To me, Superman as a fictional character is just as important as if he existed in flesh and blood—either way he is inspirational, and that's what's relevant."

On the process of making thumbnail pencil layouts (seen at actual size): "A passionate experience, intuitive and emotional. It helps develop a clear image in my mind of what I want to see. Paul [Dini] doesn't give a page-by-page breakdown in his script, and that frees me up to figure out how to tell the story along at my own pace. It's also at this stage

that the DC editors respond with notes on what they think works or doesn't, and give comments like 'avoid that tangent,' or try to keep this or that image out of the gutter of the book. At this stage, I got a better overview of something at this reduced scale than I would by working on it actual size from the get-go. Blowing it up then becomes this big release."





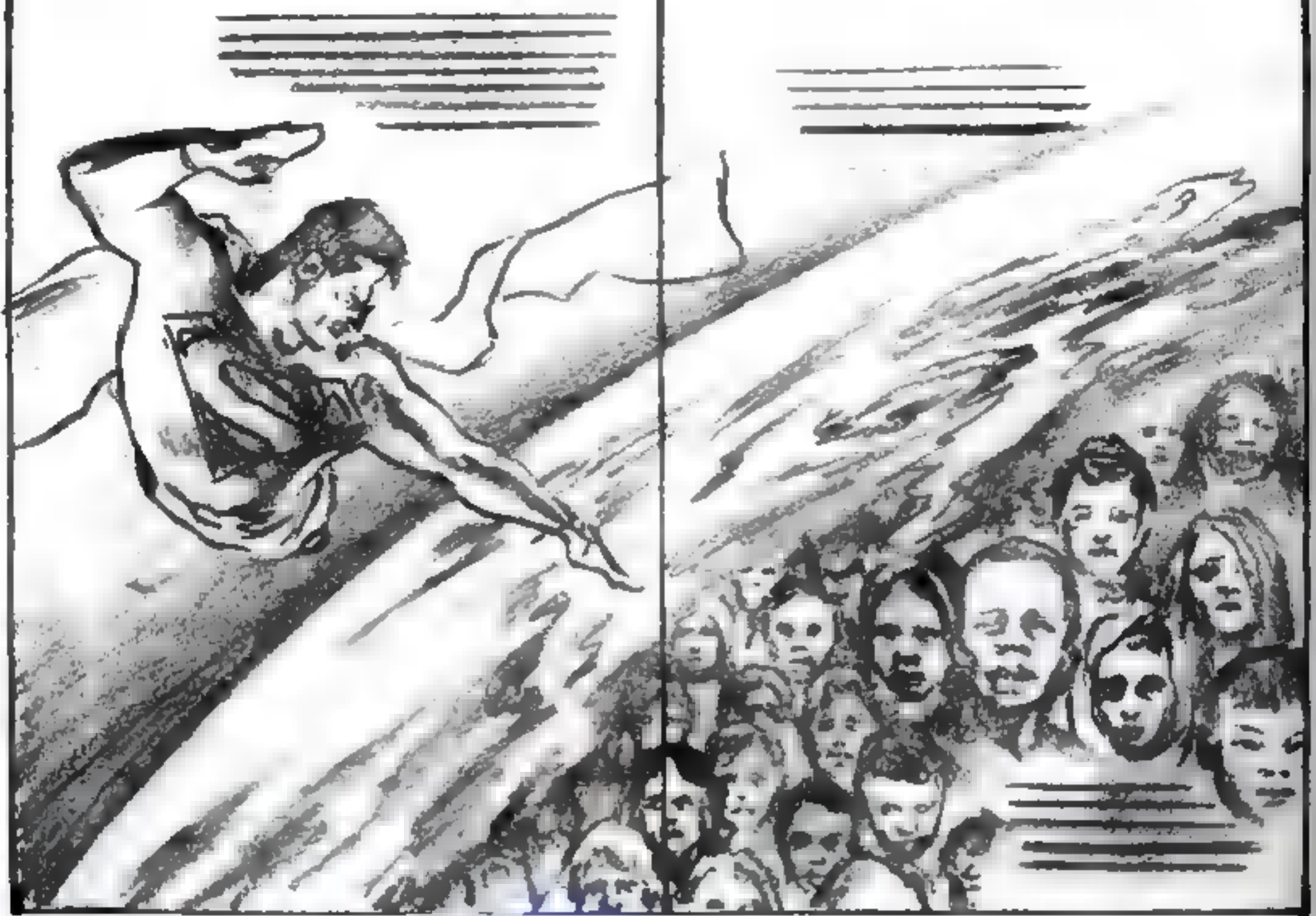
"In this story, Superman may be a stand-in for Christ, but he is also undoubtedly a metaphor for America. He's trying to fix everything by himself as opposed to inspiring others to follow his example. Paul and I weren't criticizing American foreign policy per se, we were trying to cast a benevolent eye on our country's compulsive desire to correct things in a direct, instant way—that we have not just the

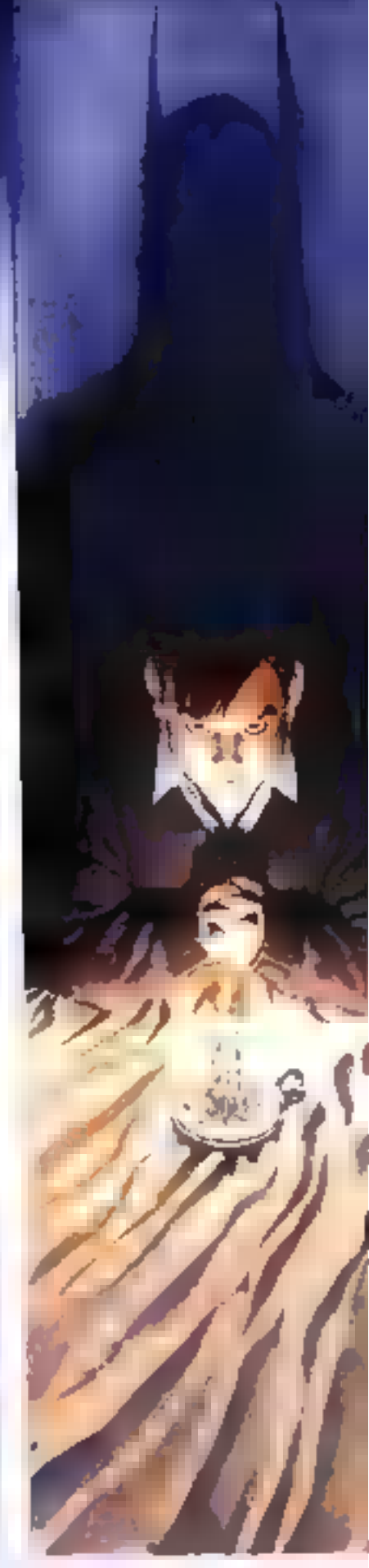
ability but the right. We tried to show that the best of intentions cannot always be rewarded or even be the right thing to do in every case.

"All of these 'tabloid' books take on basic problems within the human condition, which the heroes have no hope of solving. The point is: what they can ultimately do is not suggest a pat solution, but a viable first step."



My mission ends here, incomplete and in failure.









ABOVE Art for Batman retail poster (DC Direct, 1999).
OPPOSITE A detail of the two-page origin of Batman,
painted for *War on Crime* (1999).



FEAR



64
PAGES
OF
ACTION

Detective COMICS

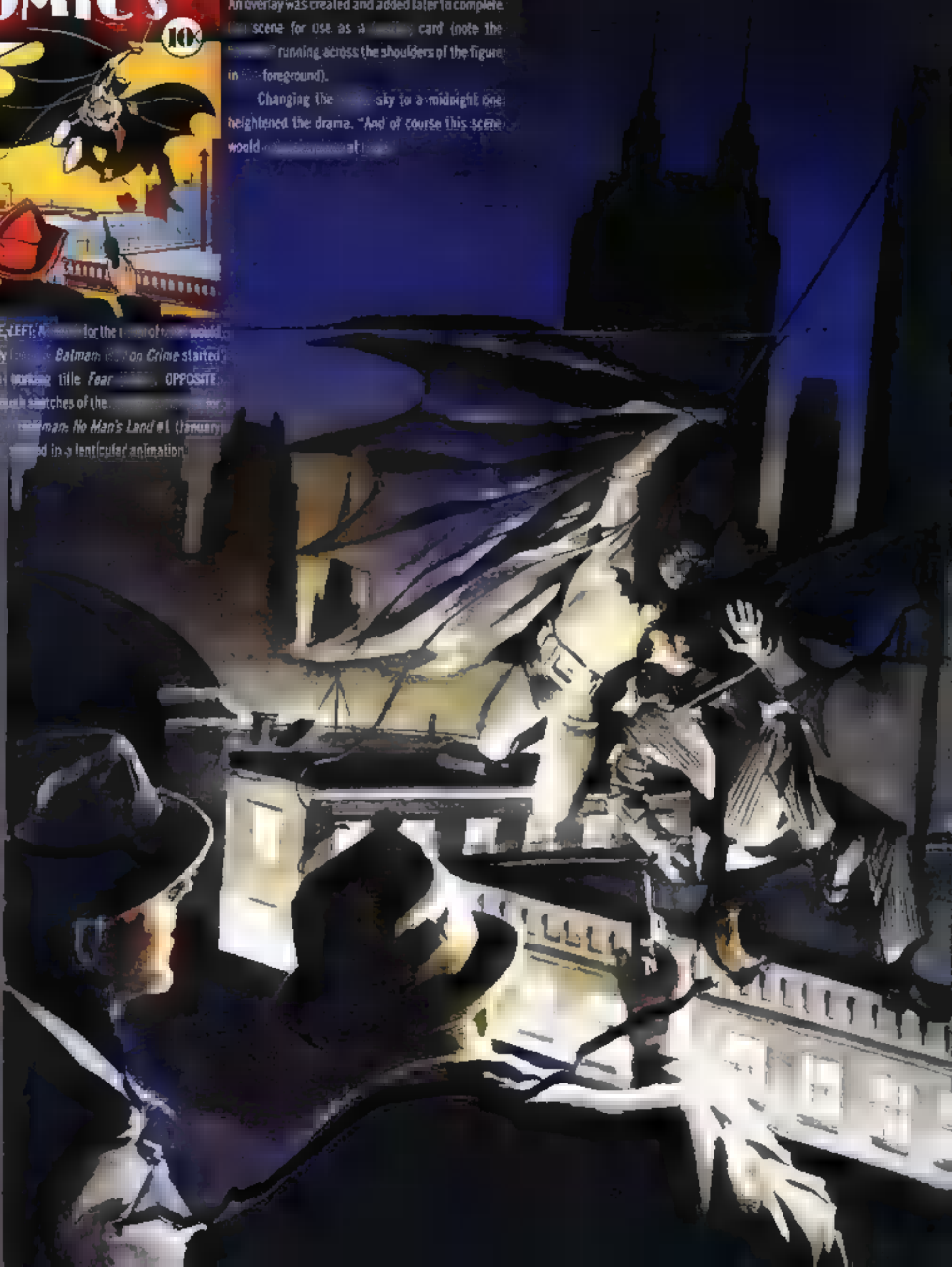
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BELOW: This recreation of Bob Kane's cover (left) for *Detective Comics* #27 (May 1939) is actually a recreation of page 13 from *Kingdom Come* #2 (1996). An overlay was created and added later to complete the scene for use as a location card (note the figure running across the shoulders of the figure in the foreground).

Changing the sky to a midnight one heightened the drama. "And of course this scene would be a great place to put a...

OPPOSITE LEFT: A recreation for the cover of *Detective Comics* #27 (May 1939) would eventually become *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992). OPPOSITE RIGHT: Sketches of the character *Batman* from *No Man's Land* #1 (January 1999) as depicted in a lentacular animation.





180 Re-creation of a detail of Bob Kane's cover (opposite, lower right) for *Defective Comics* #27 (May 1939).
181 This illustration originally appeared on the cover of *Batman: The Complete History* (Chronicle Books, 1999).



[Handwritten signature]

The 2007 special *Kingdom Come* are the first that Ross attempted in order to correct his image. He says that to say a version of him is part of DC's corporate strategy. All of the illustrations are on poses of Henry Cavill's face as it appears in various panels of *Kingdom Come*.

The line from *Kingdom Come* page marks the first time that the Hill has done a portrait of Ross. "I don't know Alex Cavill," he says. "I just did it because I was such a fan of *Kingdom Come*." This photo is a study of scale—the man's face is only about the size of a ball.

"I was like, 'I don't know if I was ever a fan of the Hill,'" says Ross. "And I don't know he looks older than I do. I was like, 'I don't know him—he has the look of age, which is..."

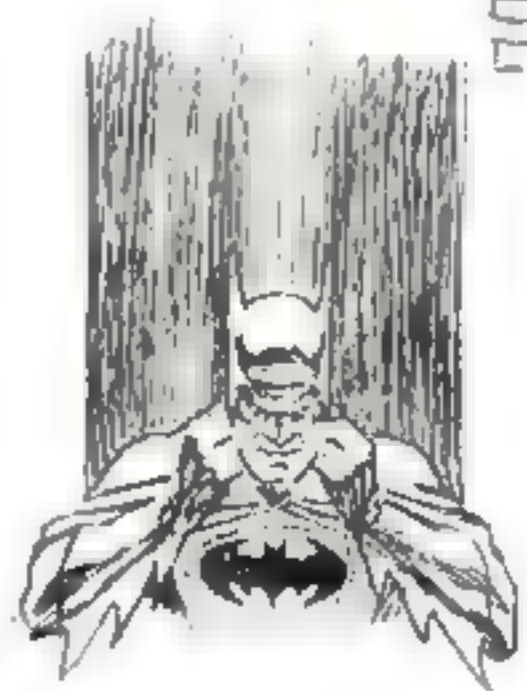




START WITH HEAD
BACK AND TOP
LIGHTING HITTING
HIM LIKE A RAY
SHAFT.

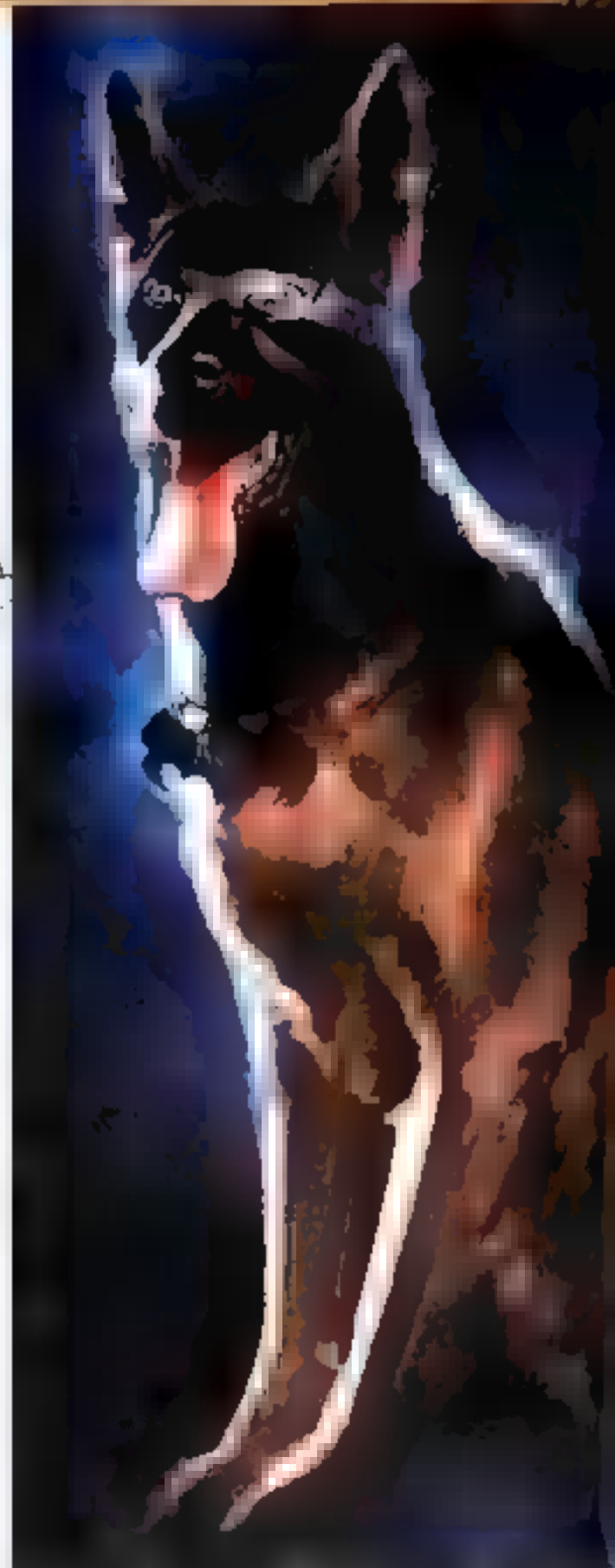


PULLING FORWARD
THE MASK SLOWLY
PULLS FORWARD OVER
~~THE~~ FOREHEAD
WITH FEATURES MOSTLY
IN DARKNESS



PULLED ON
COMPLETELY,
SORT OF HUNCHED
OVER WITH NEW
UNDERLIGHTING HITTING
FROM BELOW WHILE
TOP LIGHTING IS MORE
LIKE RIM LIGHTING,
FRAMING THE FIGURE.

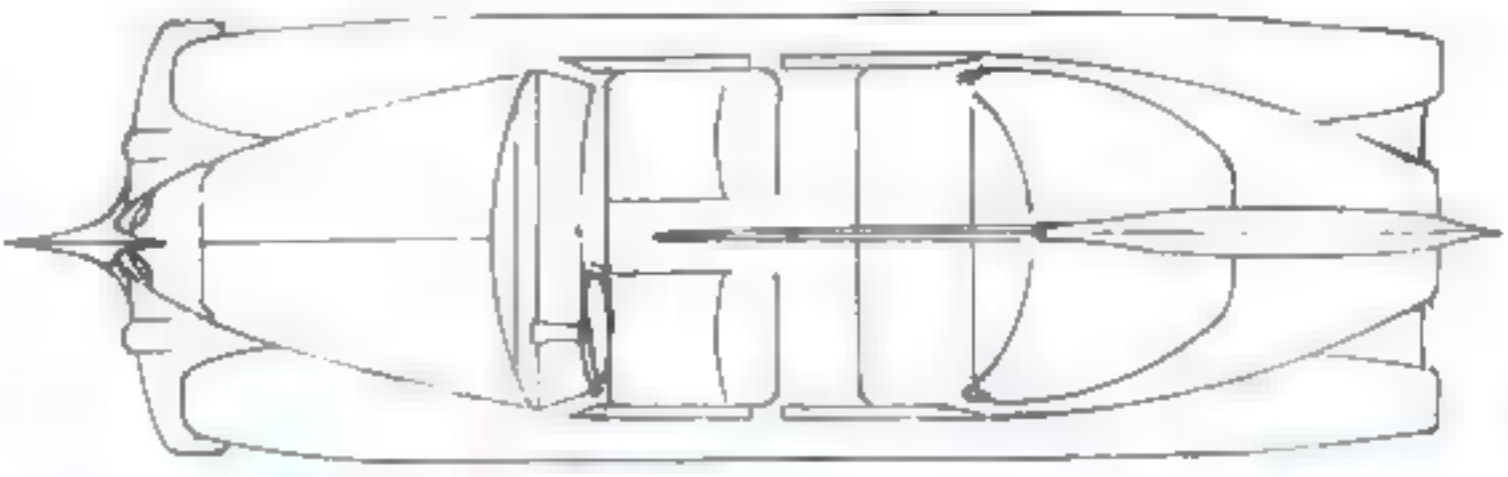
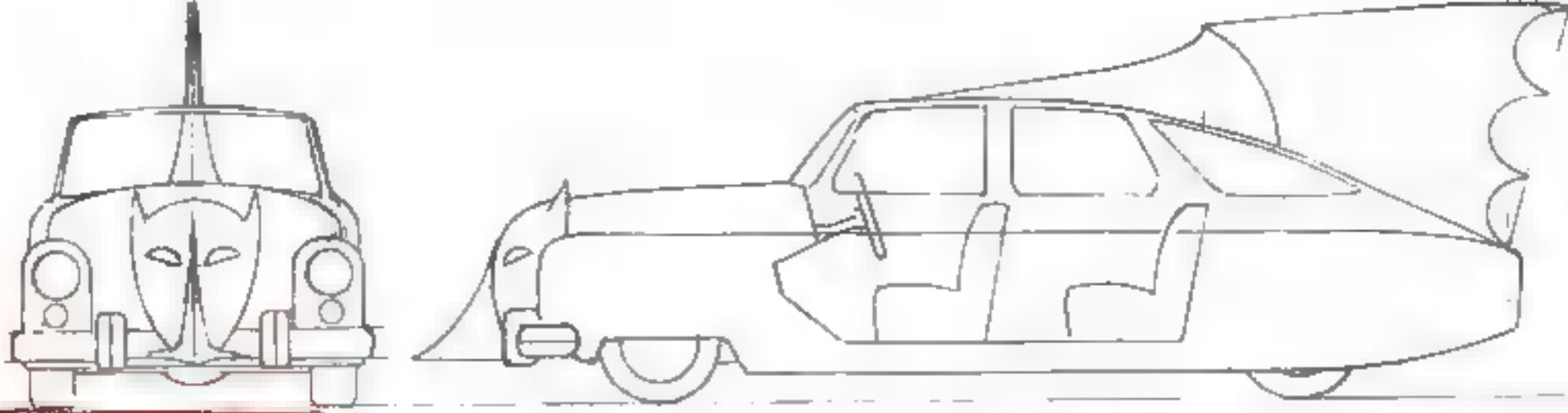
Proposed concept sketches for the cover of *Batman: No Man's Land* #1 (January 1999), to be used in a lenticular animation.



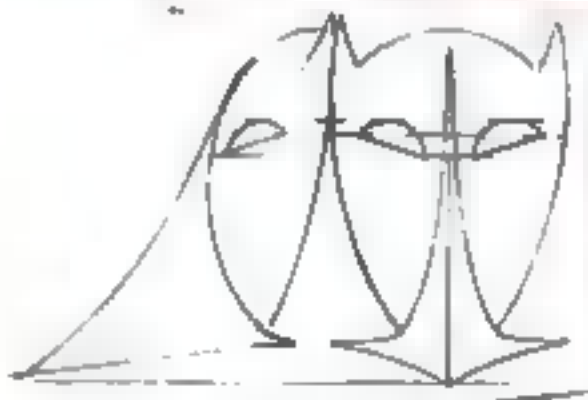
The sketches and photos on the opposite page represent the product of a young comic fan's dream. "I always thought the 1950 Batmobile, with that fin, was the coolest ever. When I was nineteen I came upon a small inheritance, and I decided I would use it to make a Batmobile for myself. My older brother Lindsay (who urged me to pursue this dream) had a keen interest in cars, and could see that the 1950 Studebaker, designed by

Raymond Loewy, was the basis for the comic book Batmobile. Lindsay eventually found one in 1991 in California, towed it to Chicago, and worked for the next several years to restore and customize it with fiberglass attachments. I admit I've never actually driven it. By the time it was working, I felt less comfortable with the idea of attracting all that attention, which I must have needed more of when I was nineteen."

TOP ROW: The 1950 Studebaker, Batman's comic costume, from *Batman Annual* (1998), and a sketch of the dog. BOTTOM: This was done in 1999 just to show what a big hobby I was. I love the look of Batman, and I love the look of the dog. I'm a big fan of the dog, and I'm a big fan of the dog. I'm a big fan of the dog, and I'm a big fan of the dog.



ABOVE: Detective Comics #156 (February 1950). Art by Dick Sprang. TOP AND BELOW: Batmobile pencil sketches (1990).



DOES ANYONE WANT TO TRY TO DESIGN A MASK THAT COULD BE MADE BY THE COURSE OF THE PRODUCTION OF THE MASK? THE MASK IS MADE OF THE SAME MATERIAL AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS.

THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS. THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS.

THIS IS THE EXACT AREA OF HOW THE MASK SHOULD BE MADE. THE MASK SHOULD BE MADE OF THE SAME MATERIAL AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS.

THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS. THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS.



THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS. THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS.



THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS. THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS.



THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS. THE MASK WAS TO BE THE SAME AS THE MASKS OF THE OTHER MASKS.



ABOVE: Art for the title page of *Batman: War on Crime* (1999).

BELOW: Two pencil studies, for video game development

(1999). OPPOSITE: Mike Hill's wax and poly resin Batman

The chief distinction of Alex's version of the Dark Knight Detective might not seem so radical to people used to watching the Batman movies of the eighties and nineties, but to avid fans of the classic comics version of the character (me among them), his modification is pretty drastic: you can now look Batman right in the eye. Since 1939, the Caped Crusader's eyes had always been glowing white slits, as inscrutable as they were fear inducing. But they do not translate into the logic of the "real" world that Alex imagines. "The only thing that makes sense is for the eye holes in his mask to come right up to his upper and lower eyelids," he says. "Then the mask *becomes* his face. But the eyes have to be exposed. They make him look more fearsome than if they're just white."

Curiously, this does not apply to Batman's appearance in *Kingdom Come*, because in that story (set in the future) he does not wear a simple cowl; he wears hi-tech battle armor, complete with glowing white beaming eyes in their classic crescent shapes.



in the weeks of his life. The Ross in the Superman wax figure, Mike Hill set about to do the same for Ross's Batman. Only the head (opposite) was finished as this book went to press. Amazingly, it looks even more like a real person than its super-counterpart. "I set this next to similar busts I have of Val Kilmer and George Clooney," says Hill, "and it looks like he's about to eat them for breakfast."







ABOVE, LEFT: A classic Arrow Collar advertisement (circa 1913) by J. C. Leyendecker provided the reference for the cover painting (opposite) of *Batman: Harley Quinn* (1999). ABOVE: Splash page by Bob Kane and Jerry Robinson from "The Case of the Joker's Crime Circuit" which appeared in *Batman* #4 (Winter 1940). BELOW: A panel from "Case Study" by Paul Dini and Bruce Timm from *Batman: Black & White*, *Issue 2* (2001).



THE JOKER.

Undoubtedly the greatest of all the Batman villains, the Joker (created by Bill Finger) in *Batman* #1 (Spring 1940). It is that version that most inspires Alex. "Looking back at the original Bob Kane/Perry [Finger] version, it seems to me that the Joker's suit was intended to be black with purple highlights, which makes the most sense—so the only thing you focus on is that crazy, glowing clown head. When he appears, he's dressed to the nines, and the shocking starkness of his face puts terror into his victims. Also, he didn't start off in the comic as the stick-thin, crazy-guy—I wanted to give him



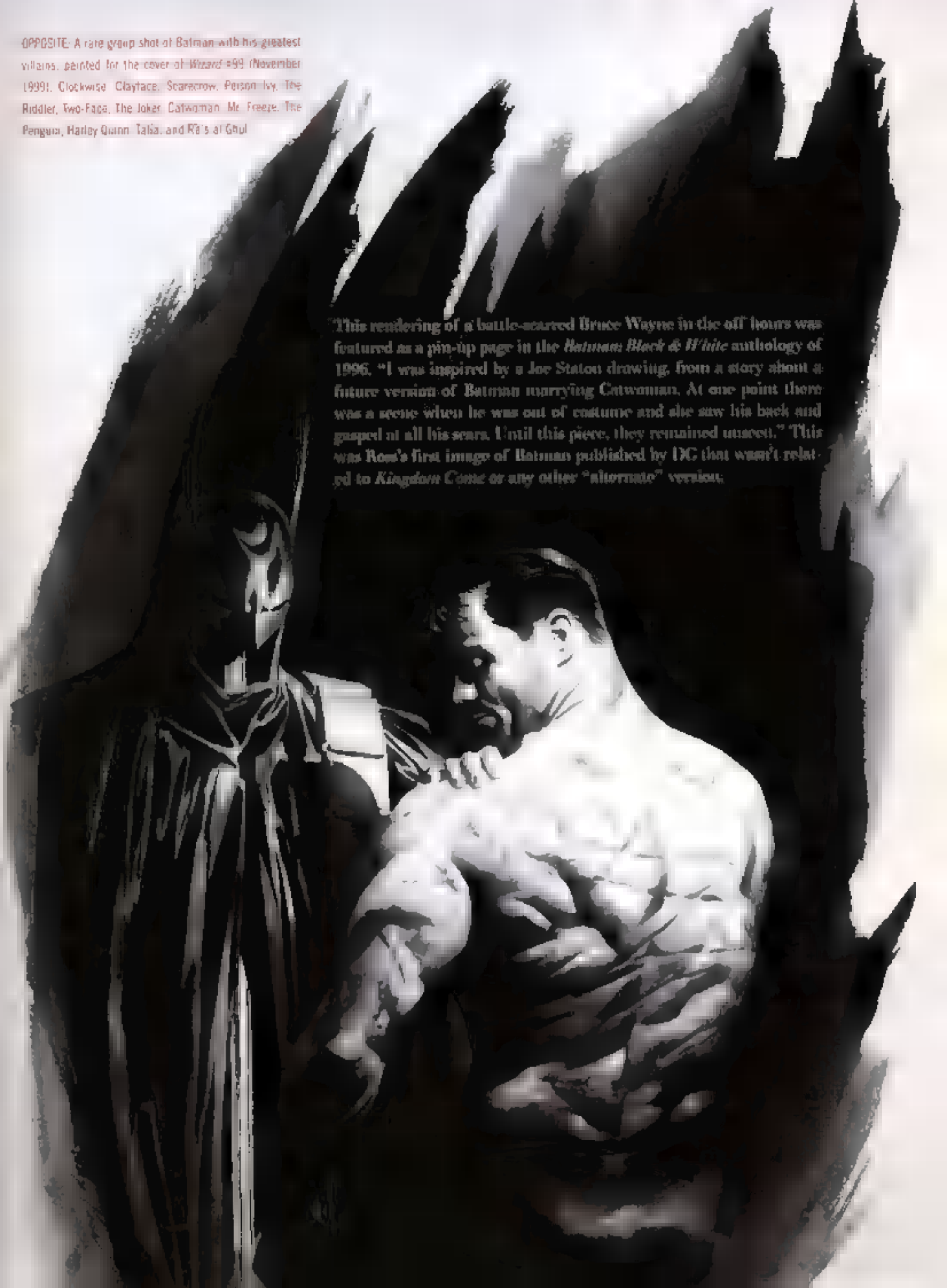
the appearance of being big and fat, but I thought that was not underweight. He was originally based on *Harold Lloyd* in the 1928 silent comedy *Shoulder Arms*. *Laughs*, and that's what I'm looking for in the true face of chaos." In the comics, the origin of the character is a small-time bank teller falling into a vat of chemicals, a mishap that eventually leads to his becoming the Joker. "He came to life." But Kane has his own theories. "In my

mind, I wouldn't have given him green hair and a pale face. The chemicals would have turned his skin white. He still has the red lips to complete the clown. There's a panel at the end of *Batman* #1 in which the Joker is stabbed and we see that his skin is white. I never forgot that—the realization that his skin was actually white. Eerie. Also, he can't die, which makes his color seem to be a sign that he's more than just a clown character."

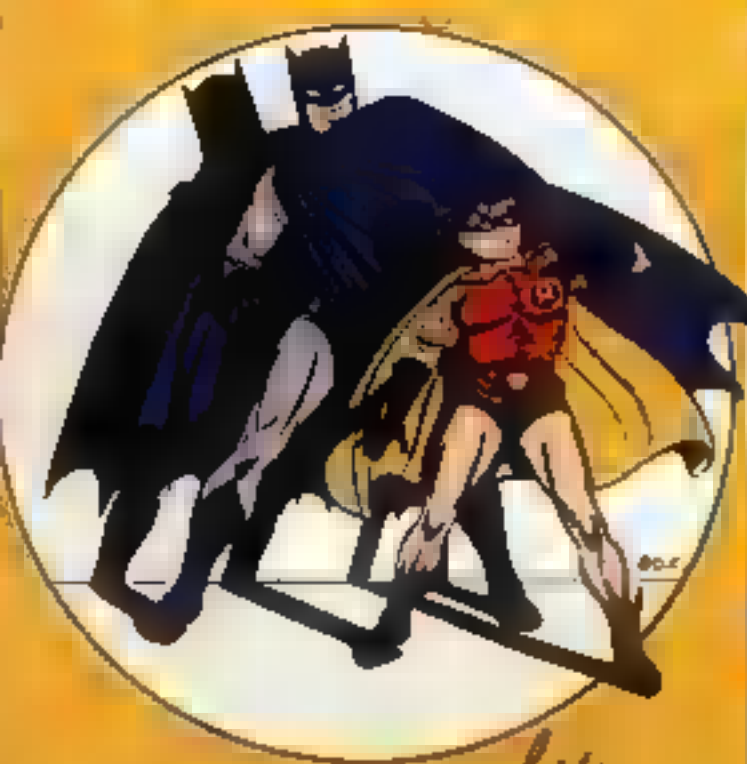
THE JOKER
BY GUY FENNELL



OPPOSITE: A rare group shot of Batman with his greatest villains, painted for the cover of *Wizard* #99 (November 1999). Clockwise: Clayface, Scarecrow, Poison Ivy, The Riddler, Two-Face, The Joker, Catwoman, Mr. Freeze, The Penguin, Harley Quinn, Talia, and Ra's al Ghul



"This rendering of a battle-scarred Bruce Wayne in the off hours was featured as a pin-up page in the *Batman: Black & White* anthology of 1996. "I was inspired by a Joe Staton drawing, from a story about a future version of Batman marrying Catwoman. At one point there was a scene when he was out of costume and she saw his back and gasped at all his scars. Until this piece, they remained unseen." This was Ross's first image of Batman published by DC that wasn't related to *Kingdom Come* or any other "alternate" version.

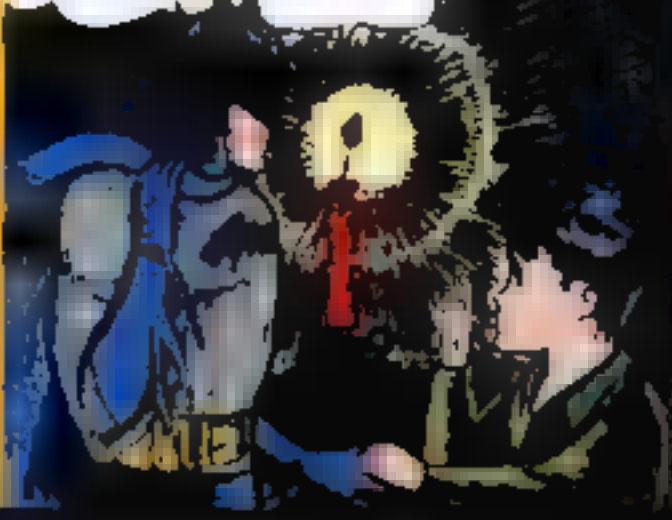


*Sincerely,
Batman
and Robin*

**THAT NIGHT TWO GRIM FIGURES
TAKE AN UNDYING OATH!**

**- AND SWEAR THAT
WE TWO WILL FIGHT
TOGETHER AGAINST
CRIME AND CORRUPTION
AND NEVER TO SWERVE
FROM THE PATH OF
RIGHTEDUSNESS!**

**I
SWEAR
IT!**



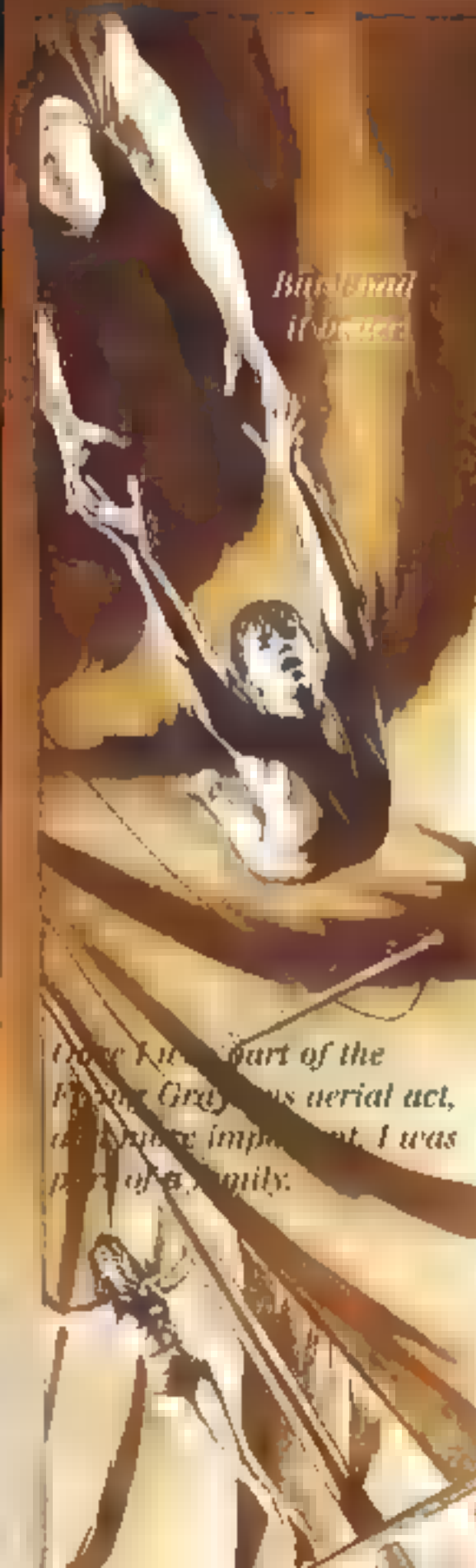
mentor, in a Bob Kane panel from *Detective Comics* #38 (April 1940). Alex then recreated the scene in *The Complete History* (Chronicle Books, 1995). ASUVE Ross's version of a classic comic book page wages a reign of terror in "Case Study," a story by [Alan Moore](#) and [Steve Meyers](#) from *Case Study* #1 (1995).



Robin- THE BOY WONDER

TEXT BY AMY DIBI
ART BY KEVIN ROSS

As a kid, I was always thinking about the
cool gadgets and death-defying
stunts. Sometimes I'd even think about



But I had
if I were



One day, I fell
came in. There
was an accident.



Sluzy hands were trying
to scare protection money
out of our circus, and
killed my folks as a
warning.



But then Batman
turned to me.

He had
the
and
wanted
him bring the



I understood
going through
cause he had
himself. He
the
full-time to



My
teacher, my
and my
friend.

I don't think
kid worked harder
to prove himself or
enjoyed it more.



I was
right
and fight for
who couldn't
modern-day
super hero.



Best of
goud, he part of
family
and to
It's



"The image of Batman with his fist thrust through the mirror glass [opposite] is one of my all-time favorite depictions of the character. I just know he's staring at himself for a long time, his mind ablaze with what he's going to do next. Furthermore, you know whatever it is, it would be pretty."

—Paul Dins







Ross was somewhat reluctant, at first, to do a rendition of Robin, Batman's legendary sidekick. "The weird thing about my ever working with Robin is that, as a character, he just doesn't make any sense. He's the compromise Batman would never have logically made. Who would put a child at risk like that, in that garish outfit? But you can't fight history, and I just remain faithful to it despite itself. There's no point in trying to make his costume look tough, or menacing, or even practical. With Robin you don't have a choice—it's those gaudy colors or nothing."

In the late 1990s the *Batman Beyond* animated series debuted, featuring a future version of Batman designed by Bruce Timm. In 1999 Ross created a *Batman Beyond* lithograph for the Warner Bros. Studio Stores, a detail of which appears on the opposite page. "I'm a fan of the design of the character—so simple a distillation of the Batman physicality. It really suits the legend."

OPPOSITE PAGE: Art for the cover of *Batman Beyond* (Warner Bros. Entertainment, 1999), which featured a rendition of Robin's costume. *OVERLEAF, RIGHT:* A detail from "Cave Story," *Batman Beyond* (Warner Bros. Entertainment, 1999). *BELOW LEFT:* Bruce's youth studies, based on the quest of artist Neal Adams. *LEFT:* A five-year-old Batman costume that Ross had made from a coat of the friend of his friend's mother, Matt Pughen. *BELOW:* *Batman Beyond*'s iconic



BATMAN

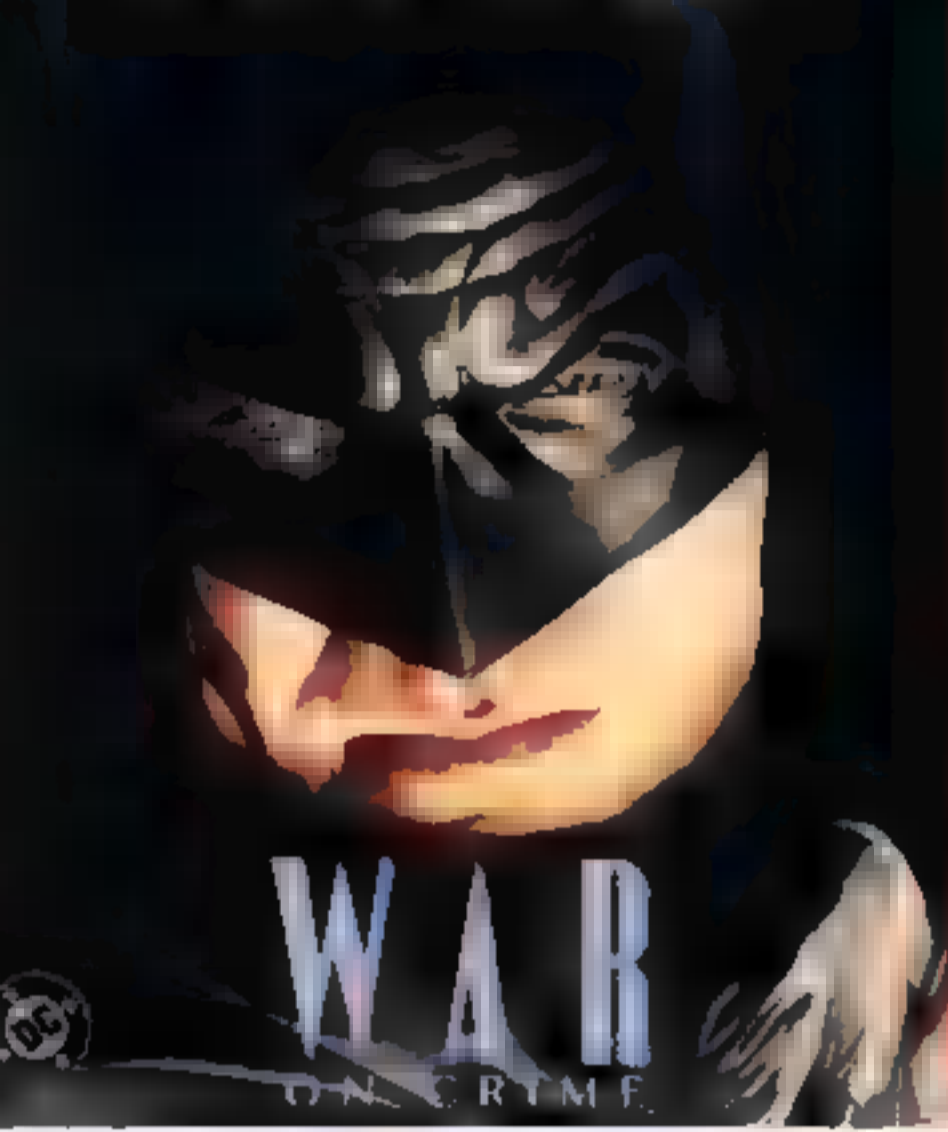
WAR ON CRIME

The second of the DC "big six" books, *Batman: War on Crime* (1999) was the first of the "New 52" era. It was a return to the classic Batman, specifically, the character as he appeared in the 1960s. The book was a direct result of the success of the 1990s *Batman* movie, which had introduced a new generation of readers to the character.

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of the story, which is that economic disparity is the root of crime.



ABOVE The cover for *Batman: War on Crime* (1999)

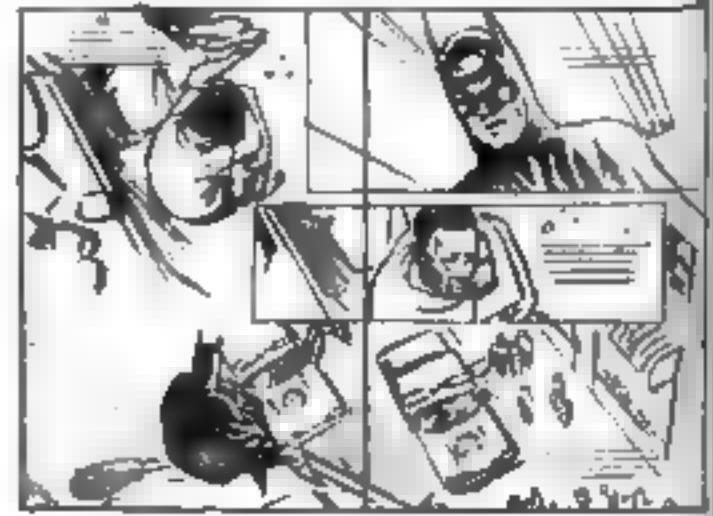
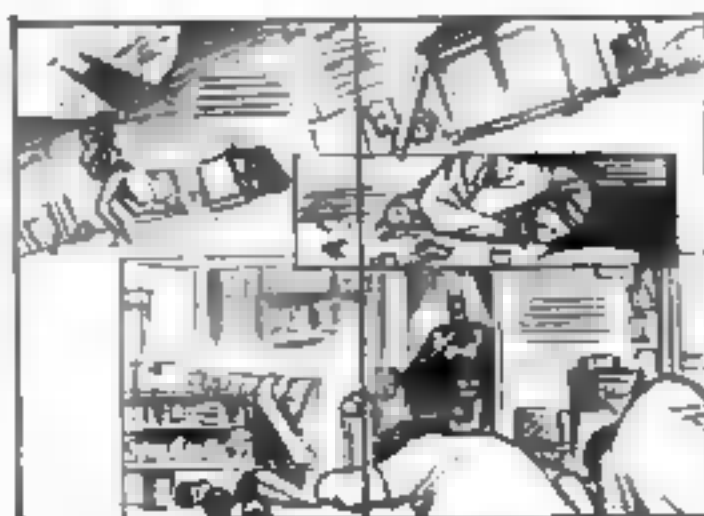
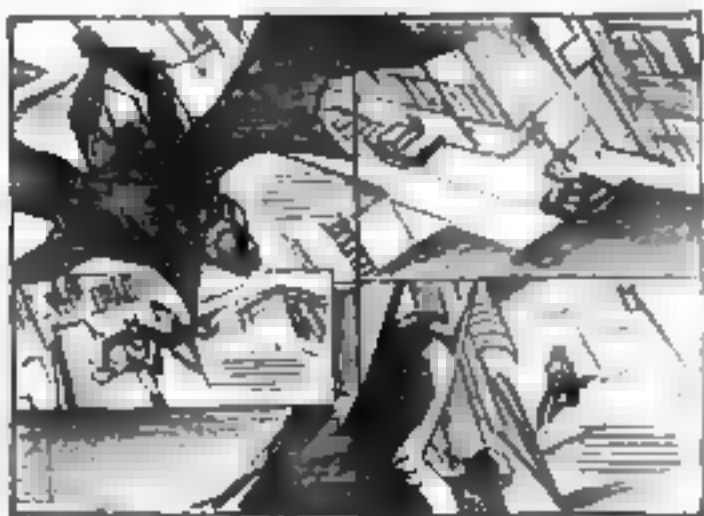


AFTER WITNESSING THE BOY'S PREDICAMENT (BEING ORPHANED OF BOTH PARENTS IN ONE NIGHT BY AN ACT OF VIOLENCE), BATMAN FOLLOWS HIM CURIOUSLY TO THE POLICE PRECINCT WHERE IT SEEMS THE BOY IS MORE VIVIDLY ABANDONED INTO A HARSH, VIOLENT WORLD. SEEING HIMSELF IN THIS YOUNG KID OF COMPARITIVE AGE TO WHEN HE LOST HIS PARENTS, STARTS THE PROCESS OF BATMAN QUESTIONING WHAT TRULY SEPARATES PEOPLE, AS THE EVENT THAT HE WOULD CREDIT WITH DEFINING HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER CAN SO EASILY HAPPEN TO ANOTHER.



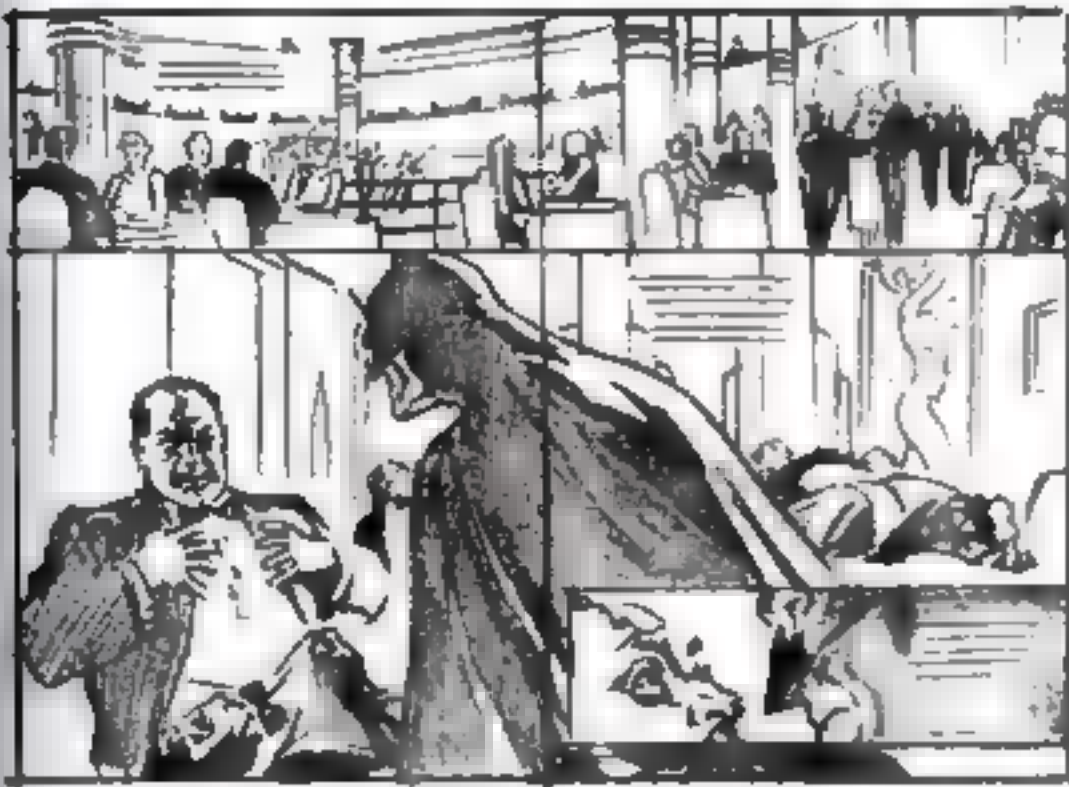


AS MORE OF THE TRAVELOGUE OF CRIME, WE GO INTO DARKER FORMS OF THE CITY'S MANY SINS BY WITNESSING POLICE CURRUPTION, INVESTIGATING MURDER (IF YOU THINK THIS IS SHOWN TOO STRONG I'M OPEN TO TRYING OTHER WAYS AS LONG AS WE DO REPRESENT THIS) AND CATCHING KIDNAPPERS, THE LATTER OF THESE I THINK CAN BE USED THROUGH THE NARRATIVE TO RELATE EVEN MORE BASE VILLAINY THAT COMES WITH RAPE AND TORTURE.



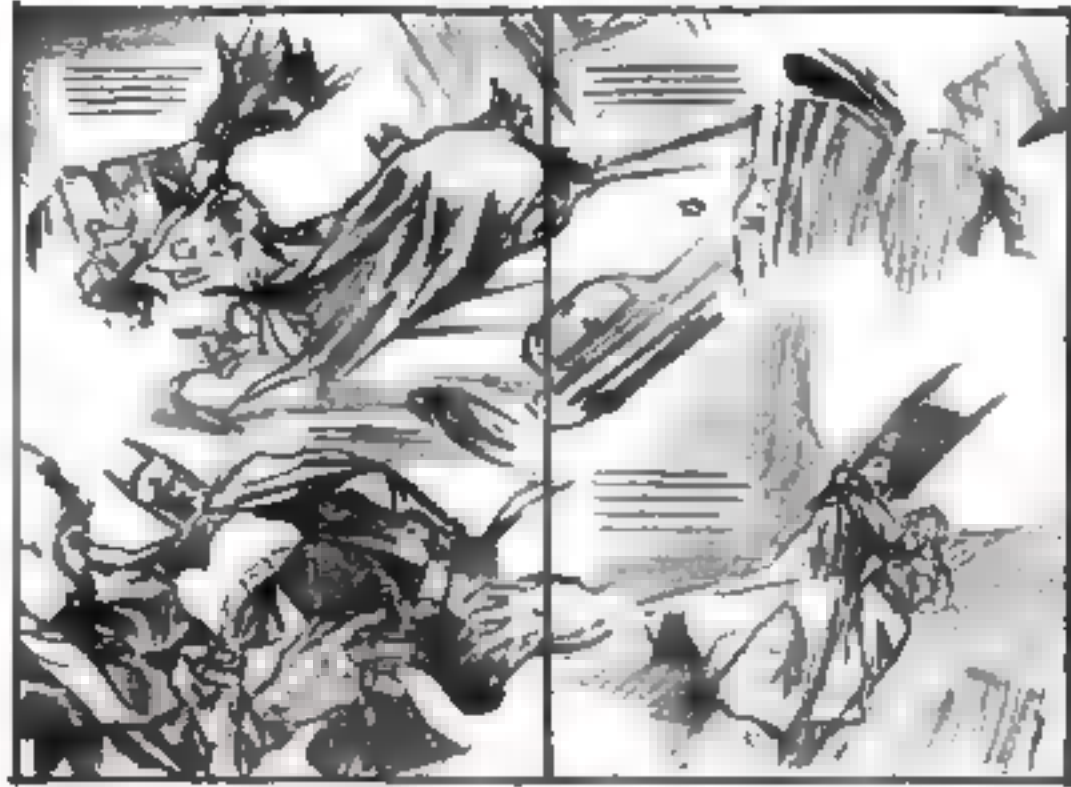






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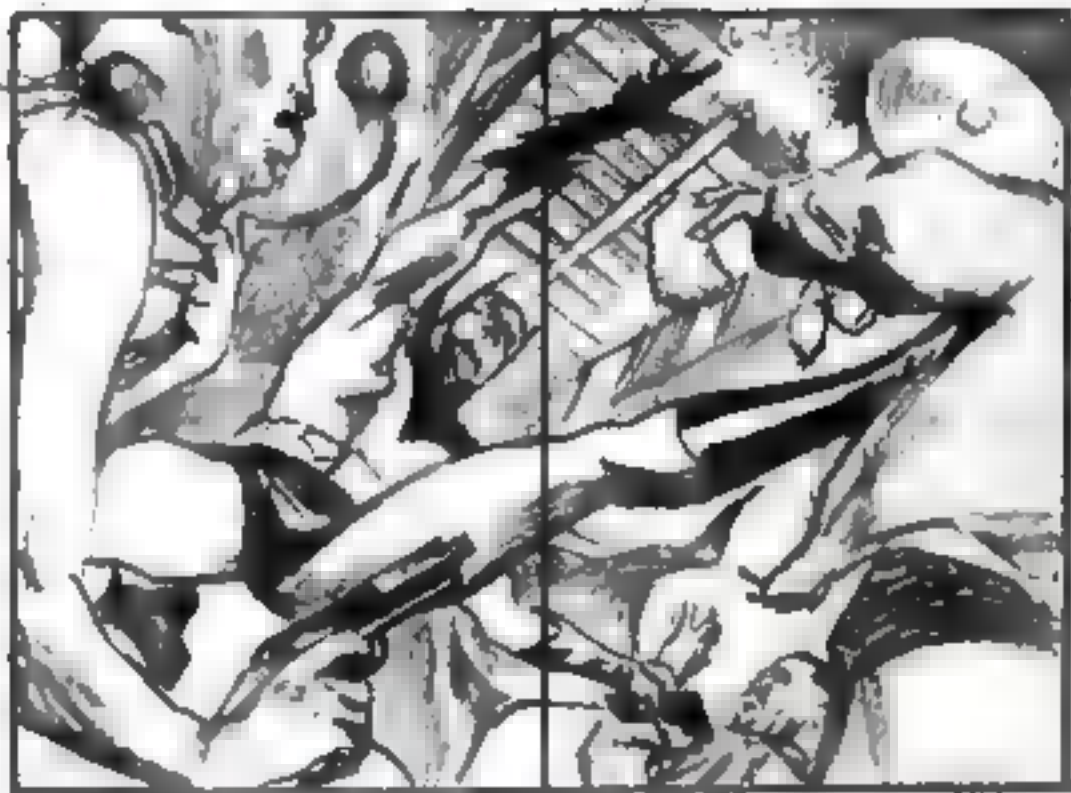
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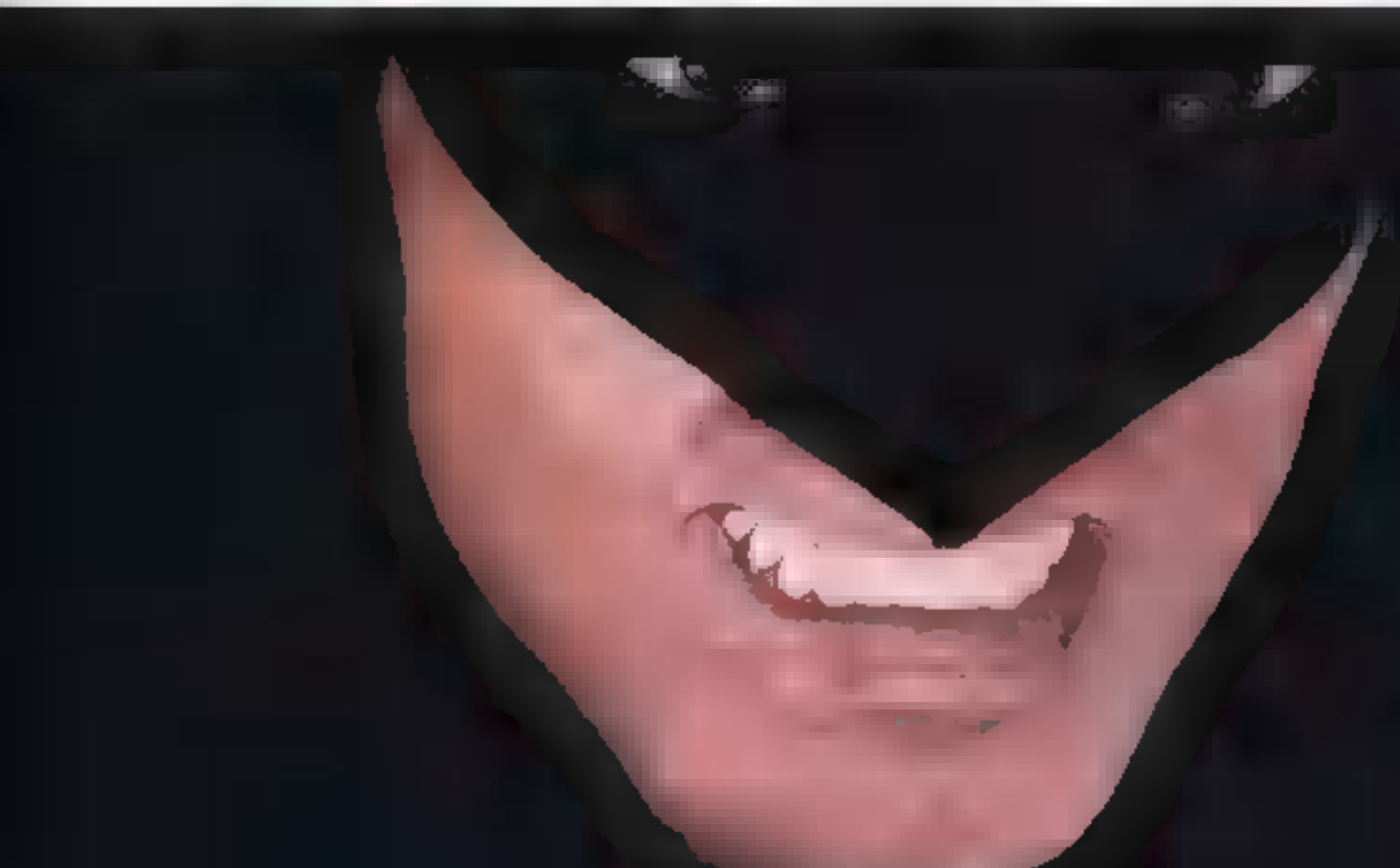
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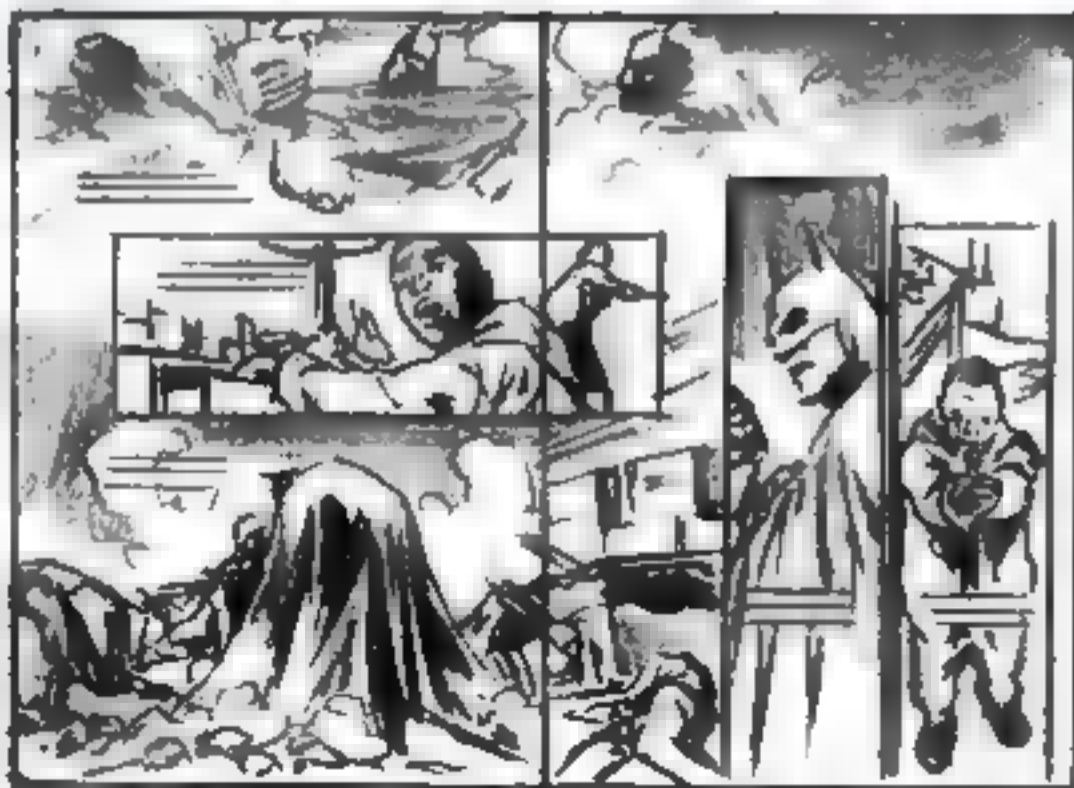


"Like *Peace on Earth, War on Crime* ends as it begins," recalls DC Comics editor Charles Kochman. "Both books are very cinematic. Dini's writing is economical and compelling, and it perfectly captures the tone and voice of the characters in a way that's individually distinct. As the Emmy Award-winning writer of *Batman: The Animated Series*, Paul's facility with this character is especially striking."

Says Dini: "Like a restless spirit, Batman is cursed to seek salvation for a terrible sin he committed in his past life, which in his mind was not being able to prevent the murder of his parents. Batman's war on crime is a symbolic war against himself."



ABOVE, AND OPPOSITE: In the climactic finale of *War on Crime*, Batman leads a major cocaine operation, only to encounter a sadly familiar face—the young boy whose parents had been murdered earlier in the story. In a tense stand-off at gunpoint, Batman confesses to the youth that he went through a similar experience at his age, and pleads with the boy to summon the courage to choose another path for his life. **OVERLEAF:** The original art for this parting shot of Batman over Gotham City brought in an astounding \$65,000 at a Sotheby's charity auction on June 17, 2000.



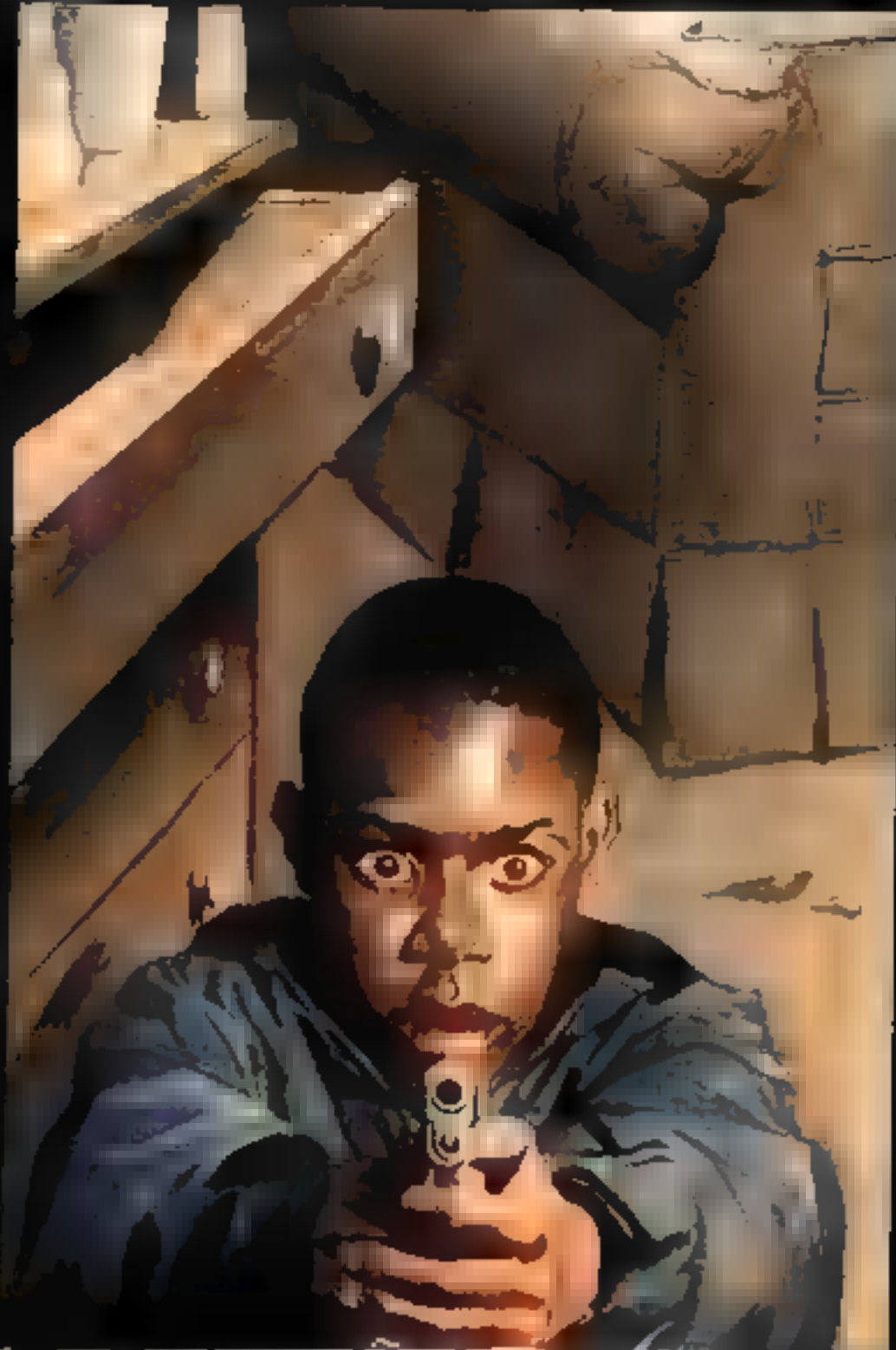
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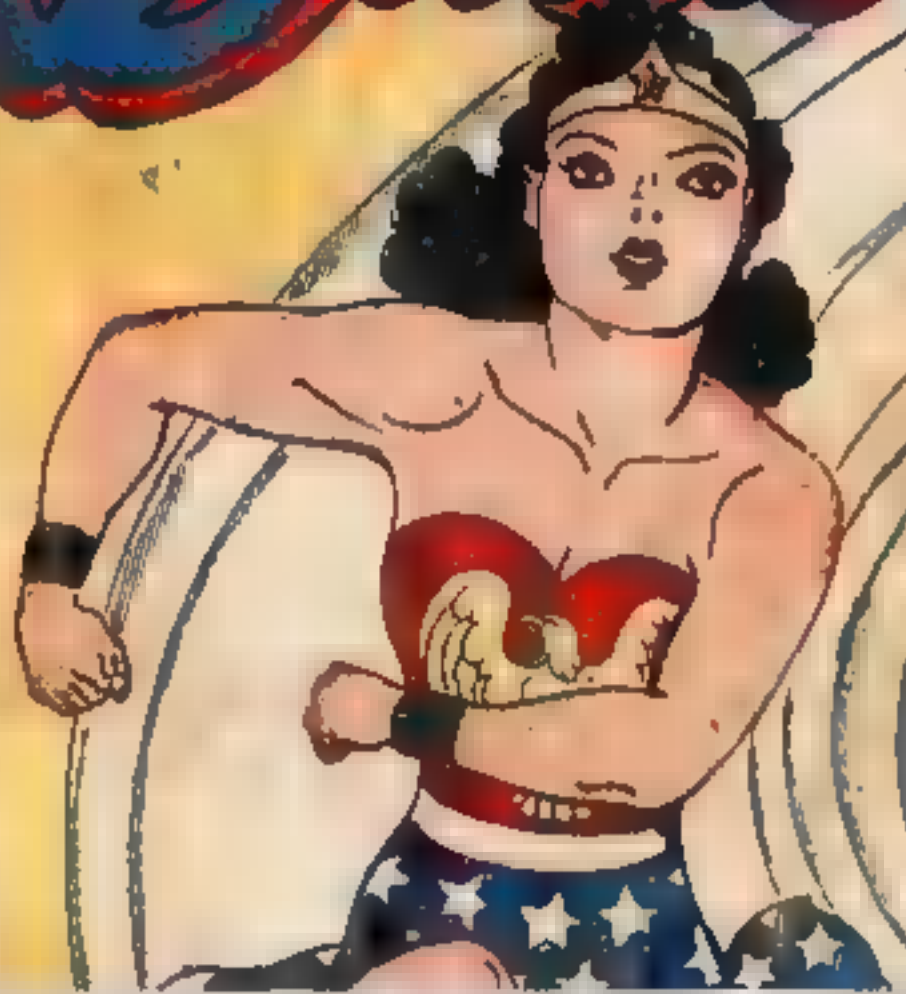




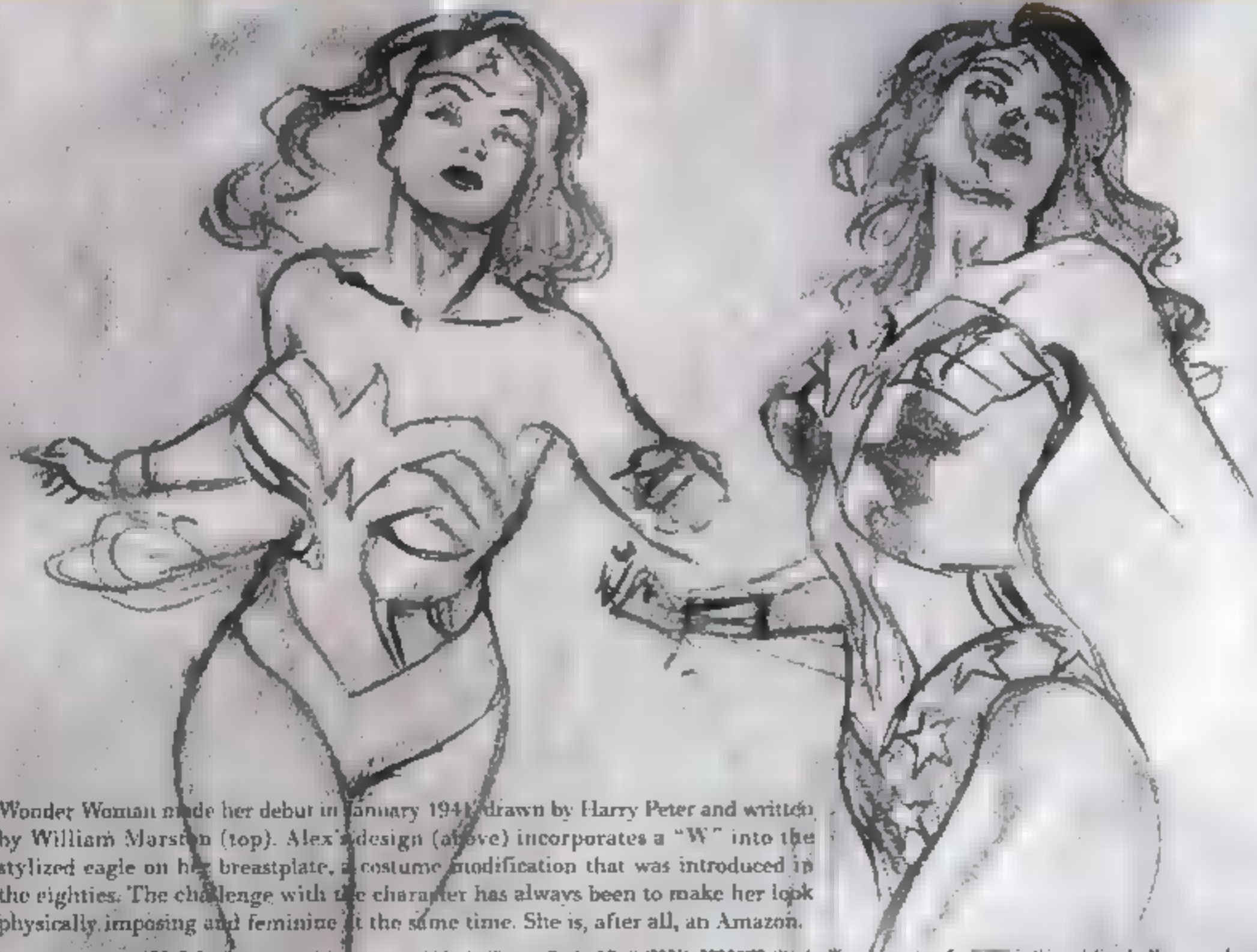
Introducing

Wonder Woman

TRADE MARK APPLICATION PENDING



AT LAST, ■ A WORLD TORN BY THE HATREDS AND
■ OF MEN, APPEARS ■ WOMAN TO WHOM THE PROB-
LEMS ■ FEATS OF MEN ARE MERE CHILD'S PLAY
■ WOMAN WHOSE IDENTITY IS KNOWN TO NONE, BUT
WHOSE SENSATIONAL FEATS ARE OUTSTANDING IN
FAST-MOVING WORLD! WITH ■ HUNDRED TIMES THE
AGILITY AND STRENGTH OF OUR BEST MALE ATHLETES
AND STRONGEST WRESTLERS, SHE APPEARS AS
THOUGH FROM NOWHERE TO AVENGE AN INJUSTICE
OR RIGHT ■ WRONG! AS LOVELY ■ APHRODITE
AS WISE ■ ATHENA — WITH THE SPEED OF MER-
CURY AND THE STRENGTH OF HERCULES — SHE
IS KNOWN ONLY ■ **WONDER WOMAN**, BUT WHO
SHE IS, OR WHENCE SHE CAME, NOBODY KNOWS.



Wonder Woman made her debut in January 1941, drawn by Harry Peter and written by William Marston (top). Alex's design (above) incorporates a "W" into the stylized eagle on her breastplate, a costume modification that was introduced in the eighties. The challenge with the character has always been to make her look physically imposing and feminine at the same time. She is, after all, an Amazon.

ABOVE: Studies for the origin sequence of *Wonder Woman: Spirit of Truth* (2001). OPPOSITE: Wonder Woman, designed by Alex Ross for DC Comics in this painting for the cover of

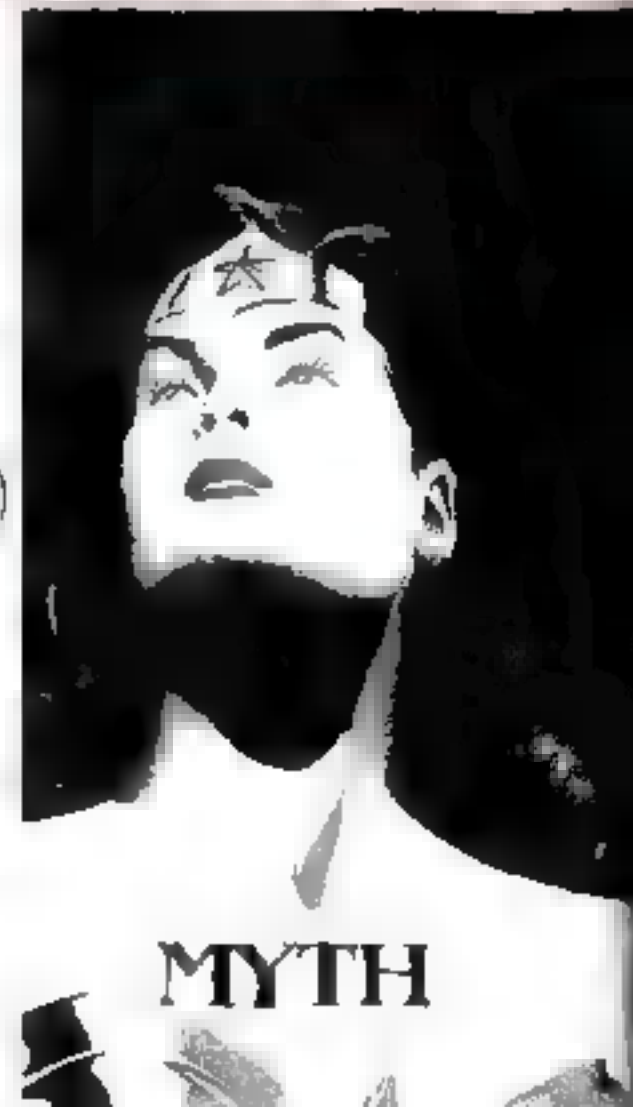
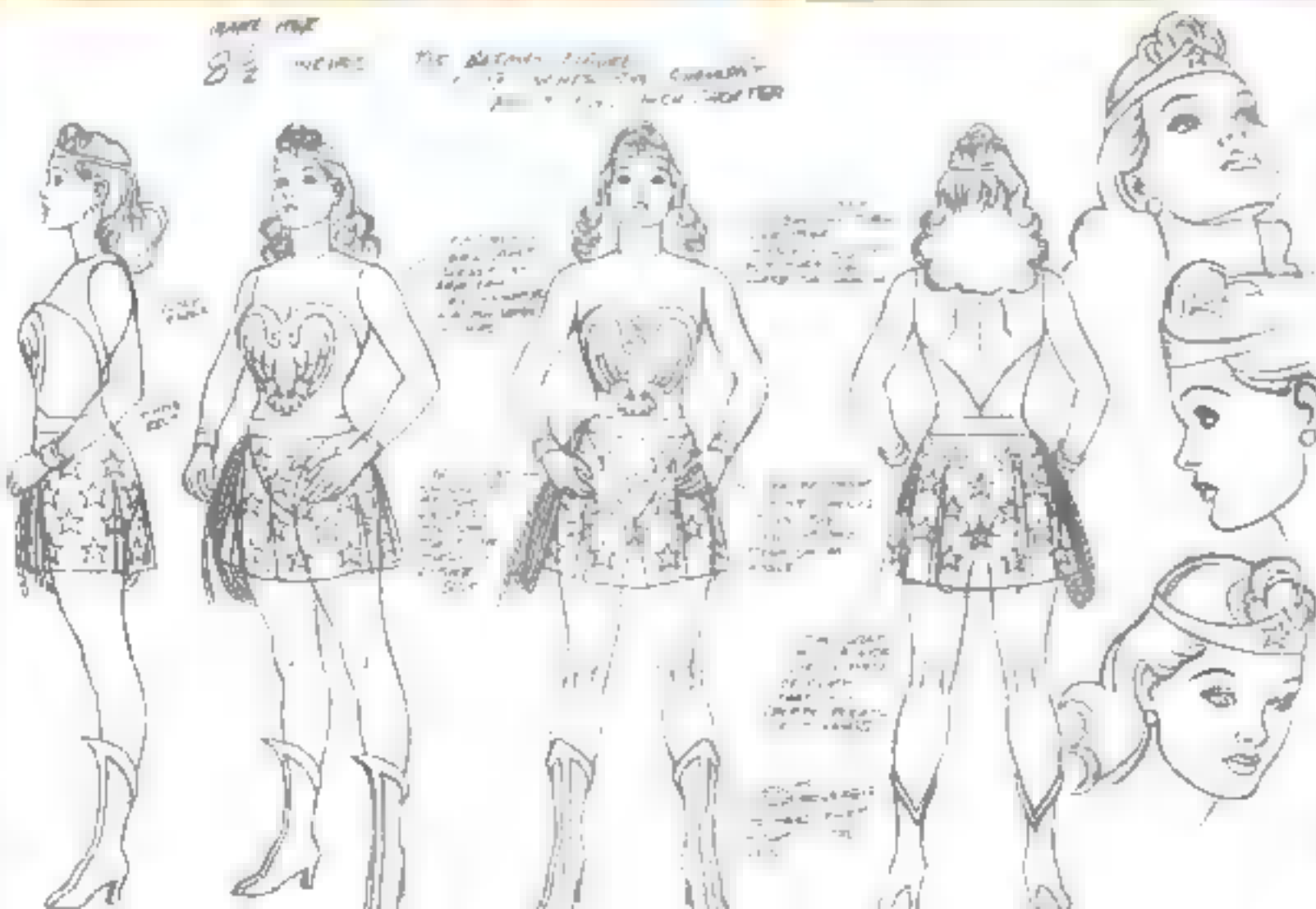
Wonder Woman: Amazon (Pocket Books, 2003)



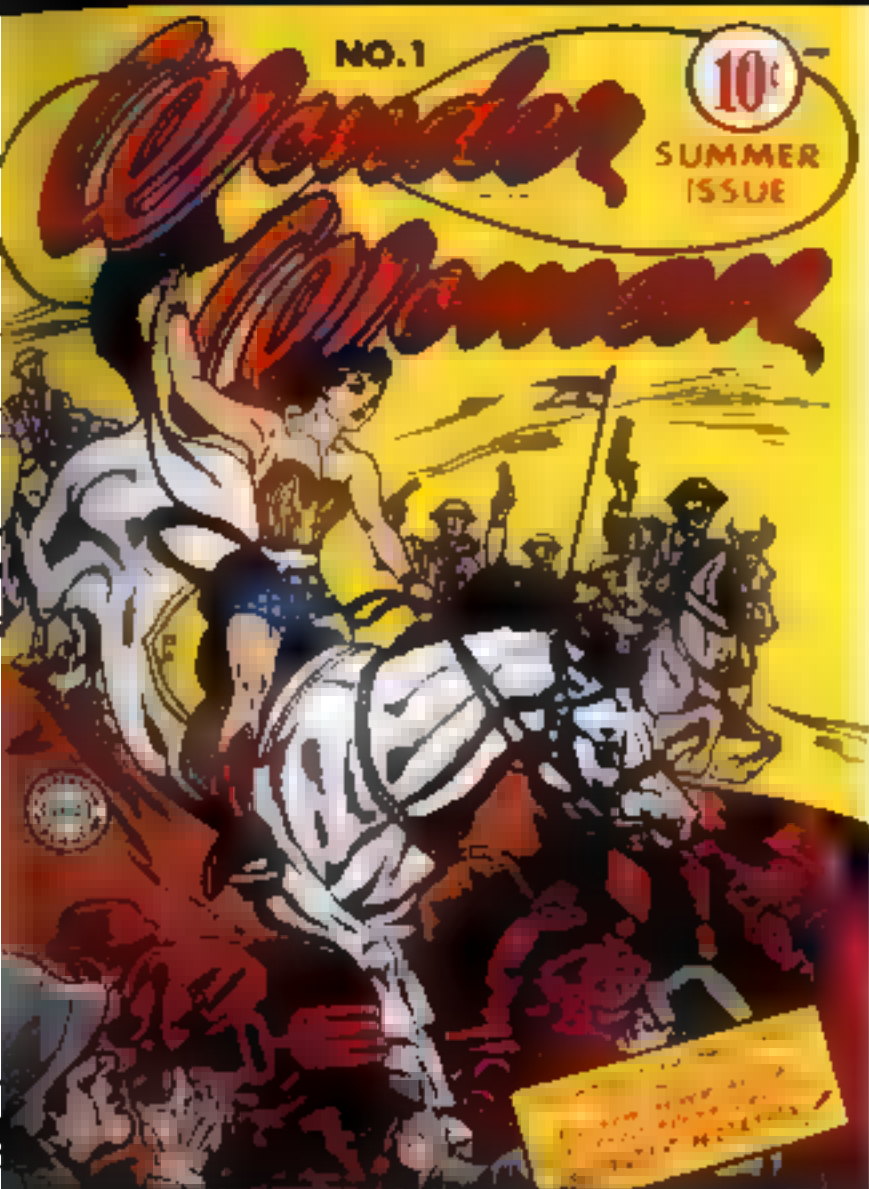
"As much as I've tried to make it all about revisiting the past, there's only so much you can do with Wonder Woman. Her original look is dated to the 1940s, so unless I'm depicting her in that era, it doesn't work. That's much less a problem with Superman and Batman because their costumes don't rely on any specific period. So Wonder Woman needs to be updated, which has its own potential problems. What I identify Wonder Woman with God does most of the public, if they think about it at all or, frankly, Lynda Carter [the star of the *Wonder Woman* TV show of the 1970s]. She made the greatest single impression on the character in the 20th century, not only more than any artist who drew her. In fact, Lynda Carter was so perfect it was hard to come up with a good variation that wasn't exactly her, but I had to. Luckily the live models I use leave their mark and guide me visually."



LEFT Golden Age Wonder Woman doll, designed by [Glen](#) and [Bob](#) Kidd sculpted by Joe DeVito, included in the *Wonder Woman Masterpiece Edition* (Chronicle Books, 2001) BELOW Production drawings for [Golden Age Wonder Woman](#) (1941-1955). RIGHT [Production drawing](#) from *Wonder Woman* (1941) (Summer 1942) [by](#) [George](#) [Pezzeri](#). RIGHT Re-creation by [Ross](#), used as a [reference](#) [model](#) in the Warner Bros. [Stores](#) edition of *Wonder Woman: The Complete History* (Chronicle Books, 2001).



BELOW: The cover of *Wonder Woman* #1 (Summer 1942). Art by Harry Peter.
 BOTTOM: Ross's re-creation, a detail of a panel from page 18 of *Kingdom Come* #2 (1996). As he did with *Detective Comics* #27, an overlay was created to expand the picture for use as a trading card. Ross has imbued the tableau with a much darker, war-like air of menace than its source, to emphasize Wonder Woman's status within the DC roster as a classical warrior. Also note that he's replaced the golden lasso in her right hand with a spear.

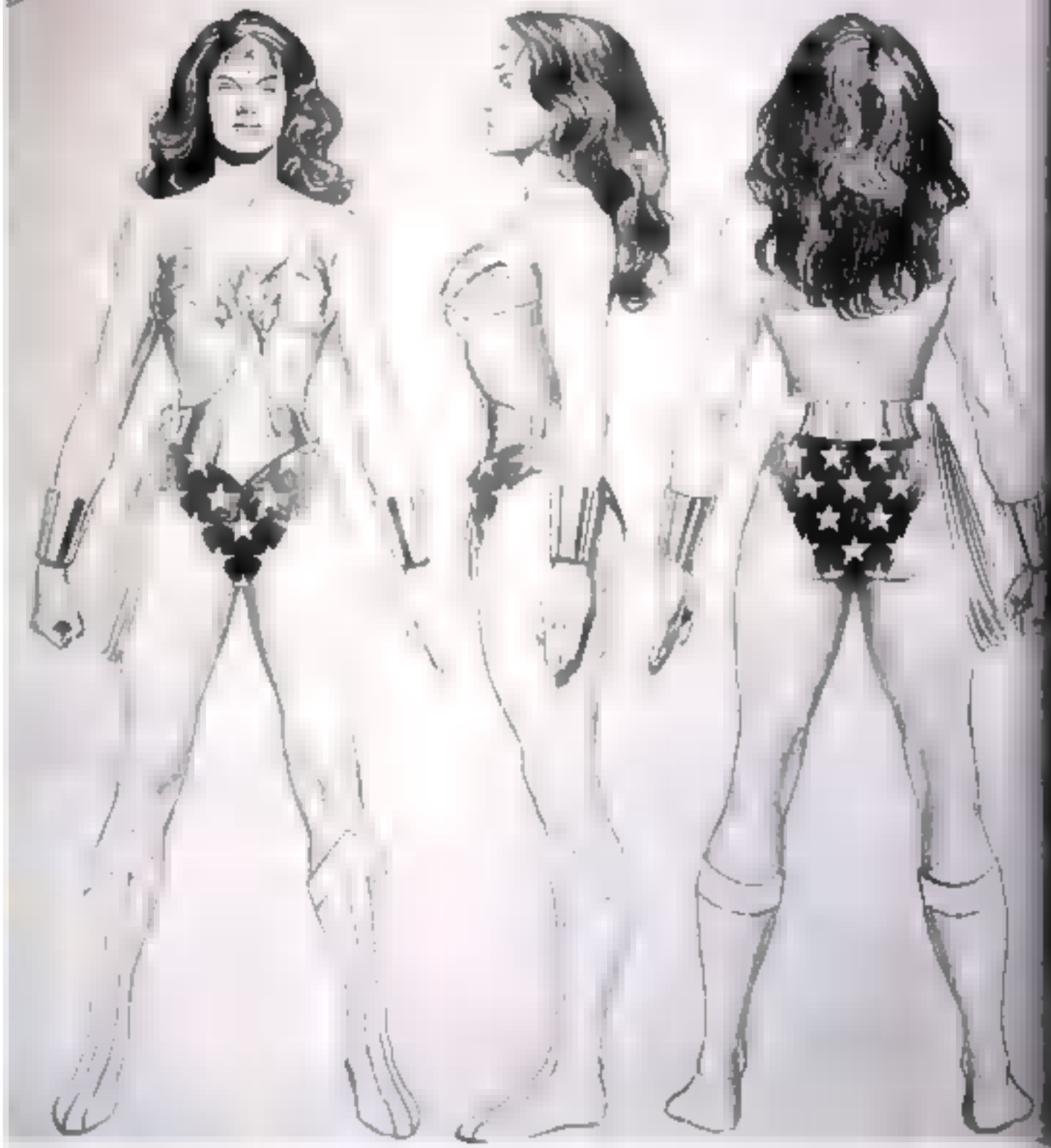


ABOVE: Production drawings for the Golden Age Wonder Woman doll (opposite page). This is Wonder Woman as she first appeared in the 1940s, when her hair was tucked into her tiara. OPPOSITE LOWER RIGHT: Proposal sketch for what would eventually become Wonder Woman's hair (*Speed & Style* [1942]).



WONDER WOMAN

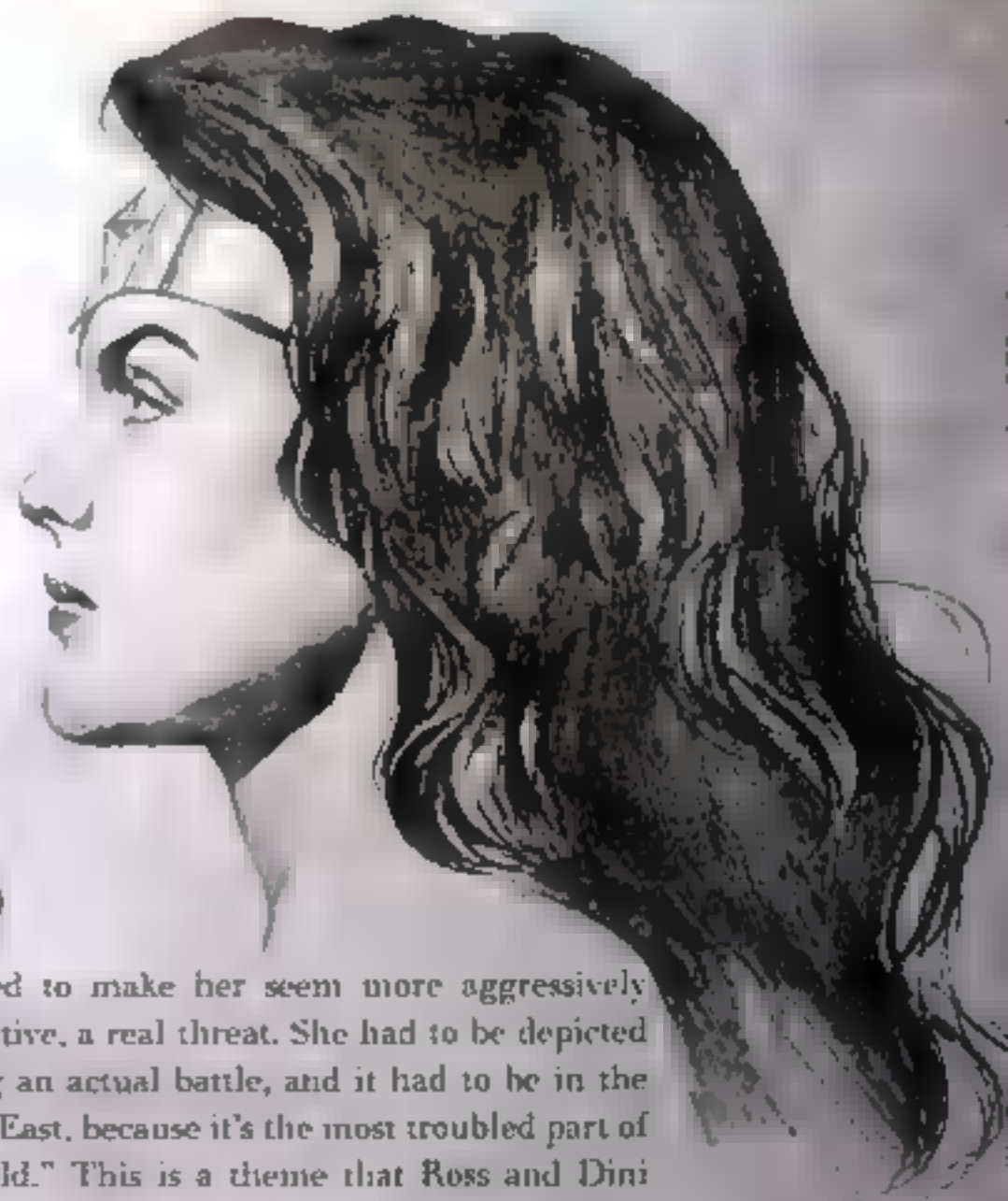
BELOW: Three turnaround views, in pencil, for video game development, from 1999.
LEFT: Art for the 1977 poster. BOTTOM: Page art for *Wonder Woman*: *Spirit of Truth*, 1987. OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Two views, in pencil, for video game development, from 1999.



“Wonder Woman is literally a goddess come to Earth. Like Superman, she sees the nobler aspirations of humanity, yet can’t understand why men and women are unable to recognize those traits in themselves.”
—Paul Dini



WONDER WOMAN
BY TURNER



The painting at the top of this page first appeared in *Wonder Woman: The Complete History* (Chronicle Books, 2000), and deals with the problem of imparting a sense of ferocity to a protagonist clad in what amounts to a one-piece bathing suit. "It took years to find a home for this image of her engaged in war, swarmed over by an enemy army.

I wanted to make her seem more aggressively competitive, a real threat. She had to be depicted fighting an actual battle, and it had to be in the Middle East, because it's the most troubled part of the world." This is a theme that Ross and Dini would eventually pursue in their *Wonder Woman* graphic album, *Spirit of Truth*.

BELOW: Jacket and cover painting for *Wonder Woman: The Complete History* (2009). Alex re-created a detail from the cover of *Sensation Comics* #1 (January 1942) by Harry Peter.



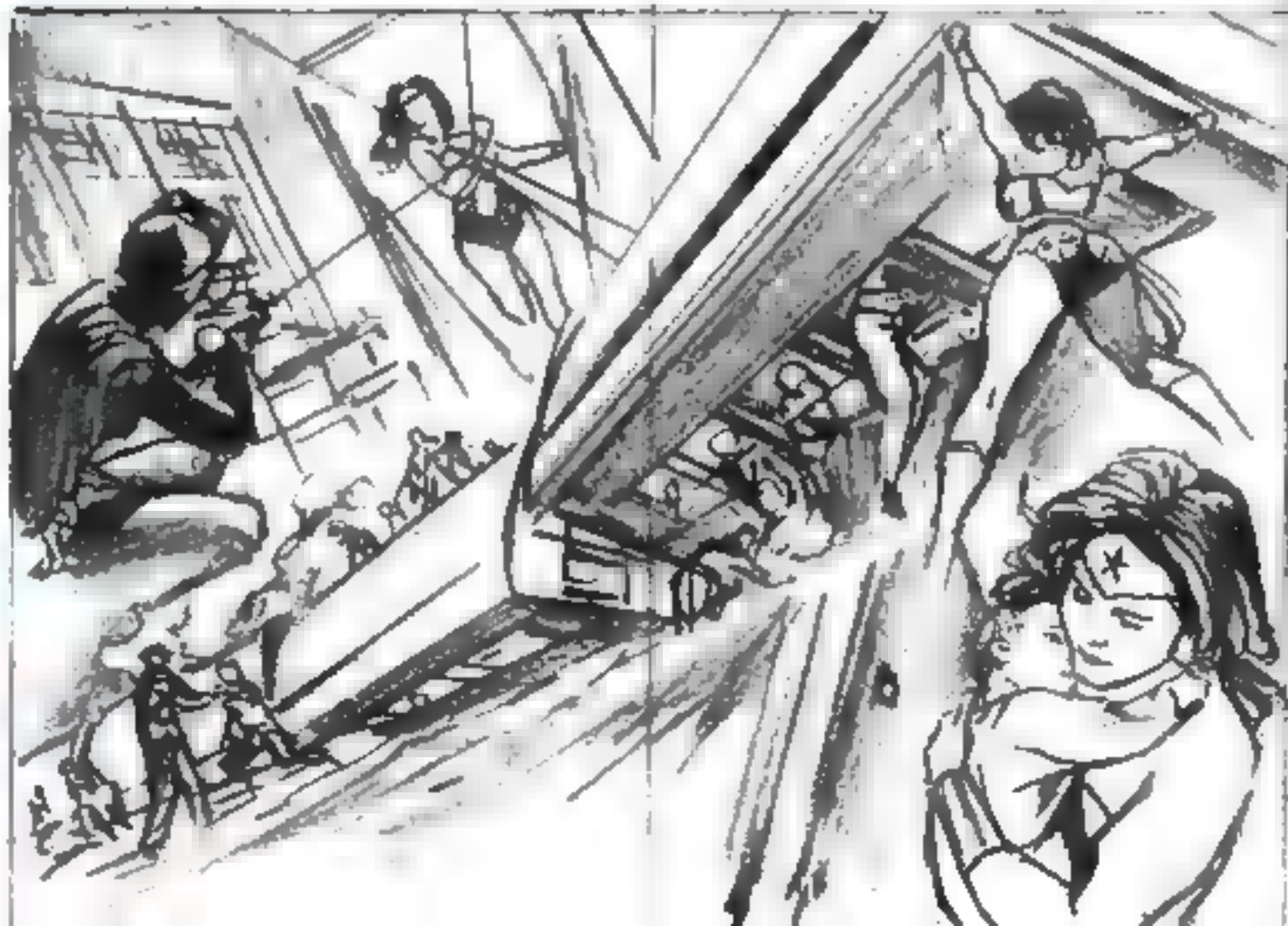
SPIRIT OF TRUTH.

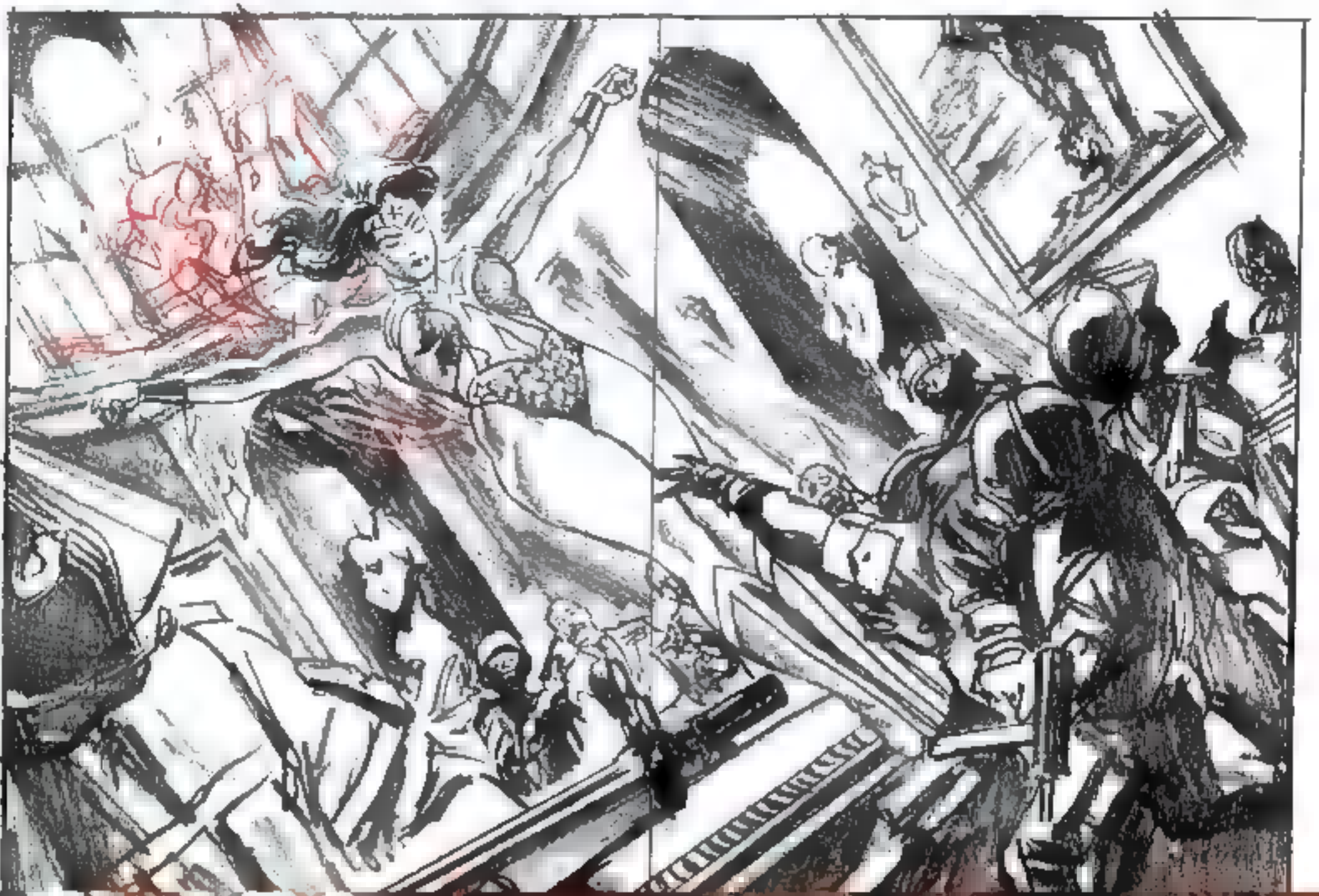
"*Spirit of Truth* takes Wonder Woman all her cloud and down into the masses, so she can see what things are like from our level," says Paul Dini. "I think Alex keeps her regal yet accessible throughout the story."

The tale was planned to be set in the Middle East long before that would have seemed problematic. "It turned out to be prophetic," recalls DC Comics editor Charles Kocourek. "Alex was almost done painting the last of the pages for this book when September 11th happened. We weren't sure how the final images of the story would be received, but we knew our intentions. We were never trying to disparage any race or ethnicity. In fact, *Spirit of Truth* developed out of mutual concern. We had

many late night conversations about Wonder Woman, all starting from a basic premise—what if she were real? How would people react to this tall, strikingly beautiful woman who went around fighting injustice wearing a rather revealing costume? And how would she be perceived, this ambassador of peace, if she showed up dressed like that in some third-world country, wearing the colors of the American flag? Once we began to confront those inherent contradictions, the story quickly took shape from there."

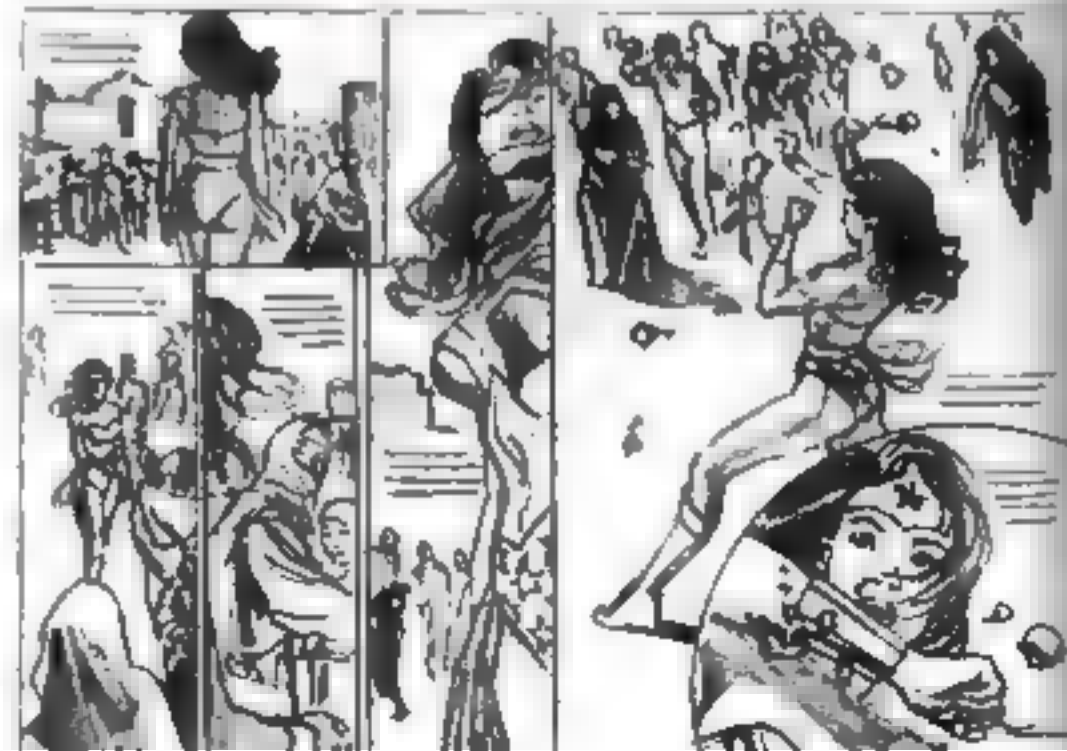
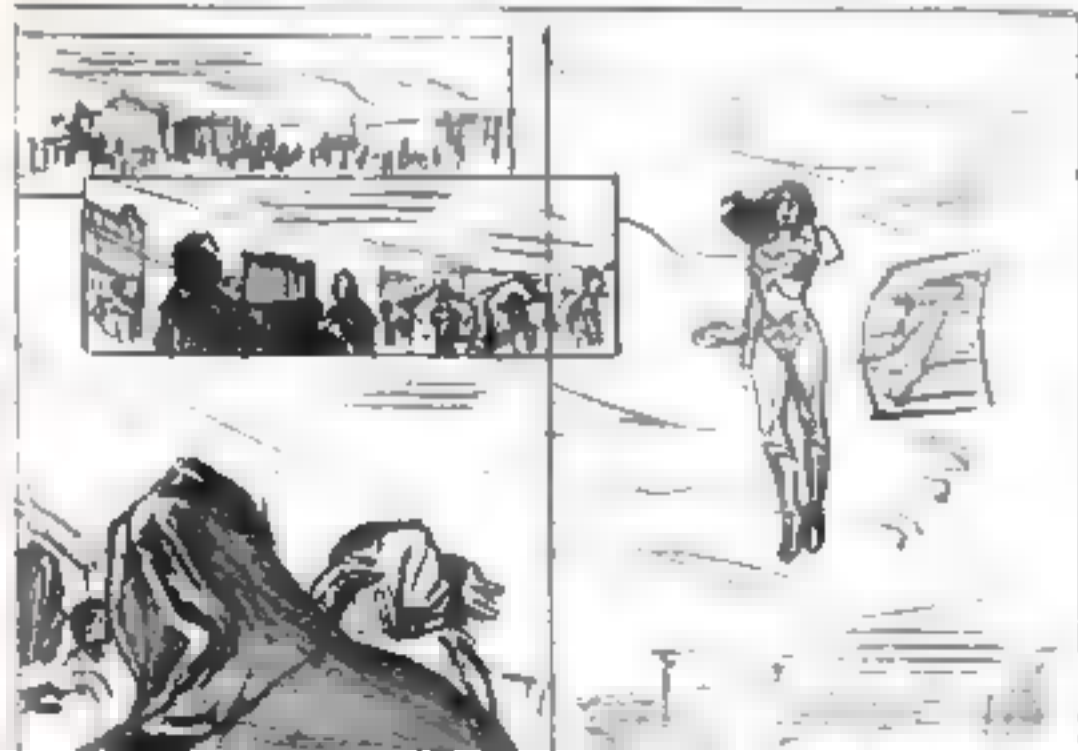
"This was the hardest of the tale to do," admits Ross, "if only because all the details of her costume meant it took twice as long to paint her. There couldn't be any roughness in the rendering."



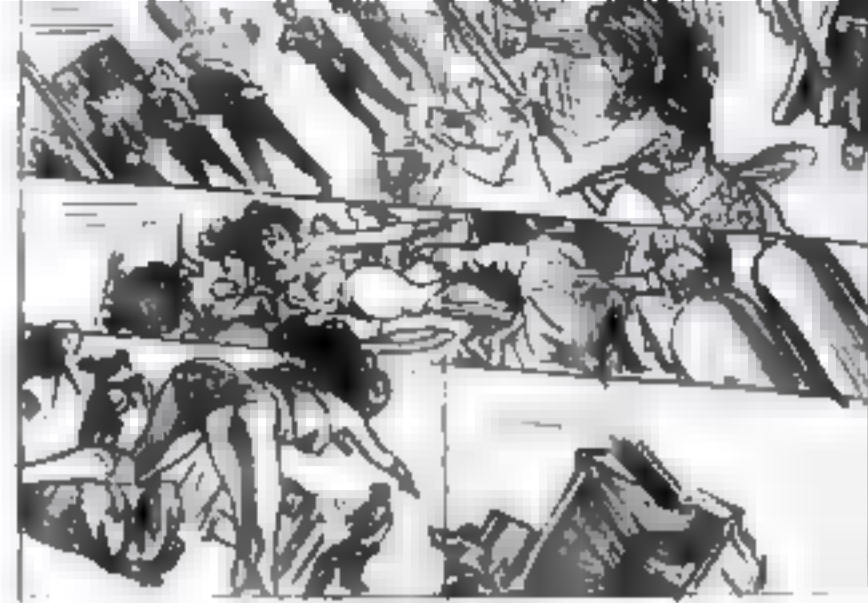




The original art for *Spirit of Truth* was auctioned online in March 2012 to benefit the *Twin Towers Fund*. \$30,000 was raised.



The thumbnail pencil layouts on the opposite page and to the right reveal Wonder Woman attempting to connect with women of other cultures and finding little or no success. A lot of the action takes place in a nameless Muslim country, and even though the Amazing Amazon falls an "oppressive regime," that doesn't stop her burka-clad sisters from viewing her with fear and resentment.





TOP: Pencil sketch study of Captain Marvel (circa 1991). BELOW: Mary Marvel soars in this personal work from 1992, eventually used on the cover of *Ego* #16 (July 2002). *Shazam!* (1955) defined the origin of Captain Marvel by Bill Parker and C.C. Beck, featuring the secret subterranean tunnel that is home to the wizard Shazam. *Shazam! The Seven Deadly Sins* (now called "Enemies") has replaced Gluttony, Greed, Envy, Selfishness, Laziness, and Injustice. *Shazam! Comics* #1 (February 1940). *Shazam!*: Rosalind Wiseman's panel from the Captain Marvel origin sequence in *Shazam! Power of Hope* (2000).



It is somewhat disappointing for die-hard Captain Marvel fans like Ross that their hero can't receive the same recognition of Superman or Batman. But he certainly used to. "What many people don't realize is that in the mid 1940s - the height of the comics industry in terms of sales - the Marvel Family titles outsold anything else, Superman and Batman included. And Captain Marvel provided the source of so many concepts in comics that were routinely copied: the idea of a 'family' of super heroes, a girl superhero, a magical quick change of identities, a super powered boy hero. I feel I just scratched the surface with what I've done with Captain Marvel and the Marvel Family. I hope I can return to them someday."

SHAZAM!





"The difference between Captain Marvel and Superman is that Marvel has that wonderful sense of humor. Superman is so *serious*. But also, because his alter ego is young Billy Batson, Captain Marvel literally has the soul of a child. I try to give him a very mysterious but personalized look (heavy eyebrows, squinty eyes, Bela Lugosi hairdo) so he's not just a handsome Everyman, but very specifically *somebody*. And as legend has it, that somebody was originally Fred MacMurray. That's who C.C. Beck based his look on."





"My first exposure to Captain Marvel was watching Jackson Rostwick play him on the 1970s Saturday morning TV show. I knew there was a difference between it and the comics (the 70s hairstyle, a twenty-something year-old—Michael Gray—playing Billy Batson), but Rostwick had totally the right look and face. I loved him as that character. And there was such a human scale to the show—I know it's scoffed at, but I'll defend it to anyone. Whenever I watch a tape of it I shiver with the feeling I'm six years old again. And as wrong for the role as Gray was, it's still electrifying to remember seeing him yell 'Shazam!' It made the hair on the back of my neck stand up."



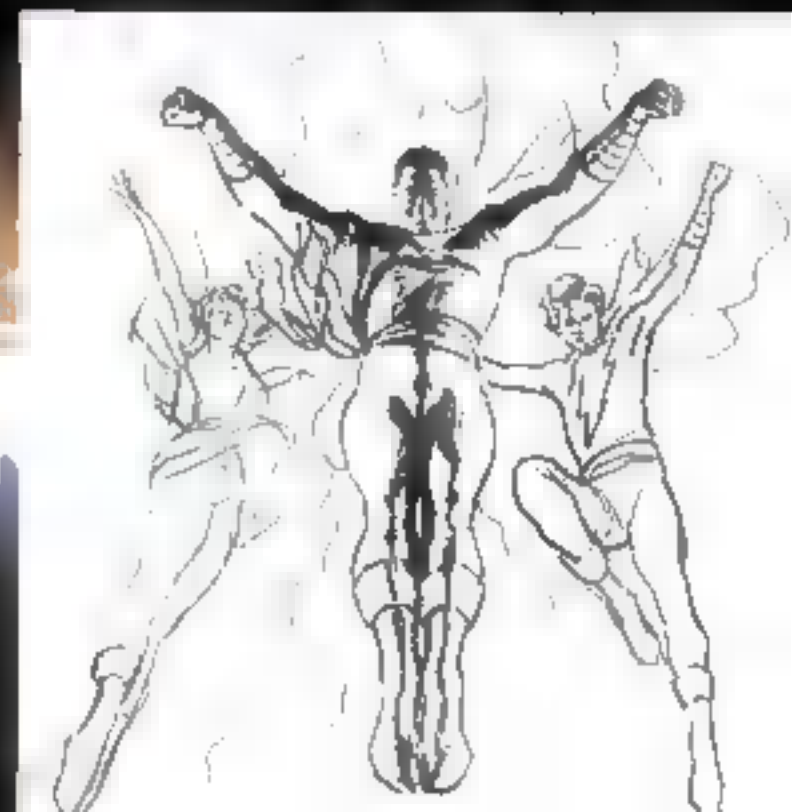
DESIGN FOR NEVER-TO-BE SEEN
SHAZAM CARTOON





LEFT: Captain Marvel takes on a giant rampaging robot in a scene from *Power of Hope* (2006). OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Ink drawings for a proposed comic book pitting Captain Marvel against Superman (circa 1996). BELOW: Pencil sketch of the Marvel Family (circa 1999).

The drawing of the Marvel Family that appears on the top half of the opposite page is from a proposal Ross devised for a Shazam cartoon show (circa 1999). "That was something I did for Paul Dini to pitch a Shazam animated series to Cartoon Network. They said they were very interested, but nothing's come of it so far. I can only say I hope it was only temporarily shelved. The drawing is a mixture of the Bruce Timm style and the simplicity of the *Powerpuff Girls*."

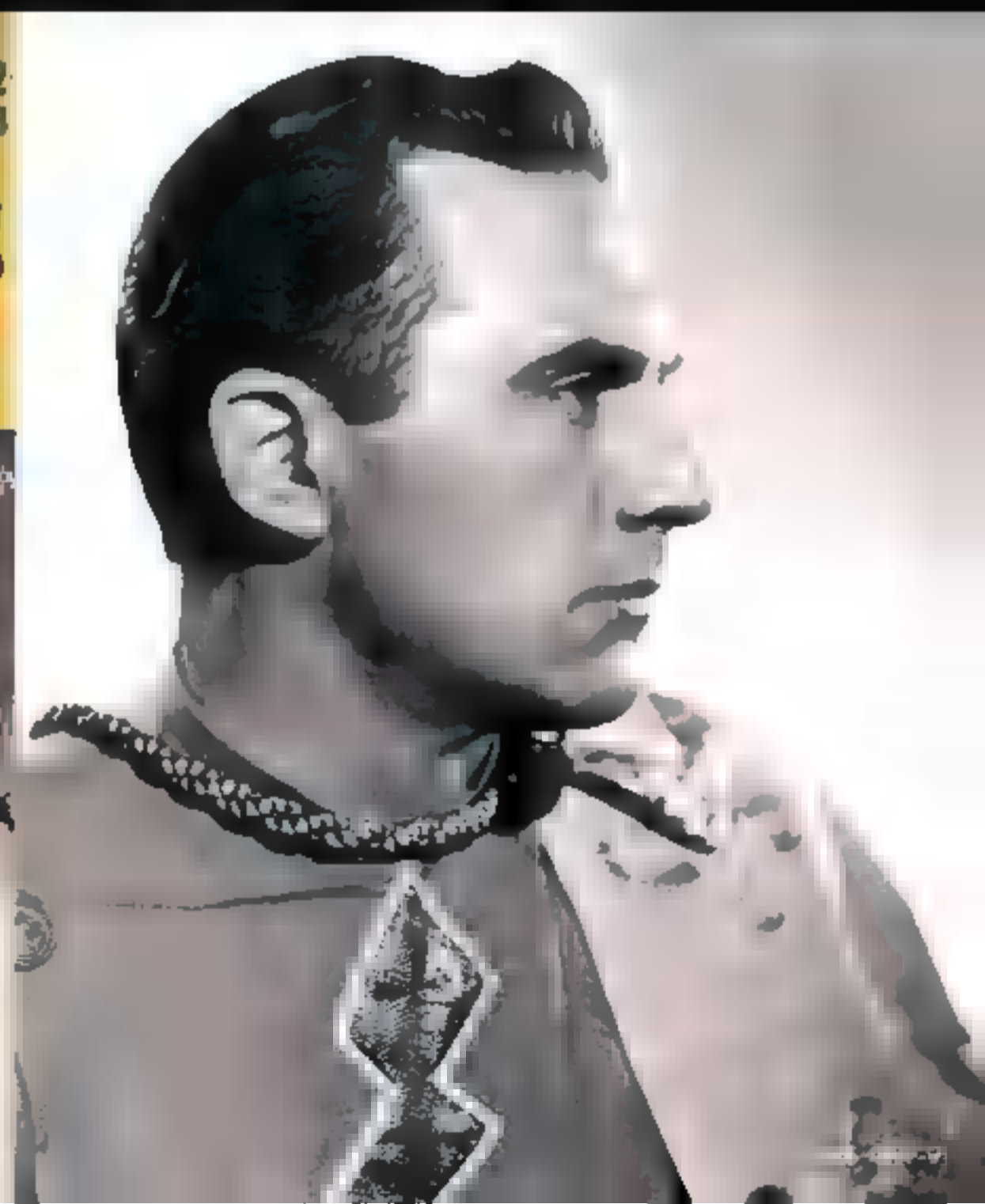






ABOVE: A sketch of the Marvel Family from 1992, with Mary Marvel based on the model Kathy Ireland, Fred MacMurray as Captain Marvel, and Michael Gray as Captain Marvel Jr. BELOW: The cover of *Whiz Comics* # 22 (October 1941). Art by C.C. Beck. OPPOSITE: Art for a Captain Marvel retail poster (DC Direct, 2001).

ABOVE: Superman and Captain Marvel go at it in this ink drawing, part of a unproduced comic proposal (circa 1998). BELOW: Tom Tyler played Captain Marvel in the 1940s Republic movie serials. "His costume was the major inspiration for how I depict him. Especially the gold on his chest and cape. That series is commonly considered the best superhero movie serial of the period ever made. I sure think so."



BOTTOM: A detail from Captain Marvel's origin story in *Shazam! Power of Hope* (2001). BELOW: Neal Adams's drawing for a comic book featuring several heroes (the basis for the original panel's audience). OPPOSITE, TOP: Captain Marvel tames a rampaging monster in *Power of Hope*, a scene that mimics *Shazam!* #1 (below). OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Art by C.C. Beck for the cover of *Power of Hope*, and the cover art.

POWER OF HOPE.

"In many ways, this book is a childhood dream come true," says *DC Comics* editor *Craig Newmar*. "I was 10 and *Shazam!* was 10, and we both shared a love for the original *Captain Marvel*. In *Power of Hope*, the series' 50th anniversary, this was the book that needed to be the best. His story had everything: a terrific origin, an amazing roster of villains and friends, and a super hero who embodied the ultimate in wish fulfillment. Not only could Billy Batson become an adult superhero with one magic word—'Shazam!'—he could become an adult *with* superpowers. He was not just *any* super hero, he was the World's Mightiest Mortal. If one can indulge in that familiar childhood promise of 'Who is stronger than whom?', for my money, *Captain Marvel* was the strongest of them all. Creating a story that lived up to that legend was actually easy. But all his grandeur, even down *Captain Marvel* was just a little boy. And that's how he sees the world. He's very, very human. I think *Power of Hope* is perhaps the most human of all the stories *Paul* and *Alex* have told." *Paul* agrees: "There was originally a lot more of the *Shazam!* myth in the story, but that would have taken away from the focus we wanted to put on, which was the very human scale of how *Captain Marvel* would deal with troubled children because he is essentially a child, too."

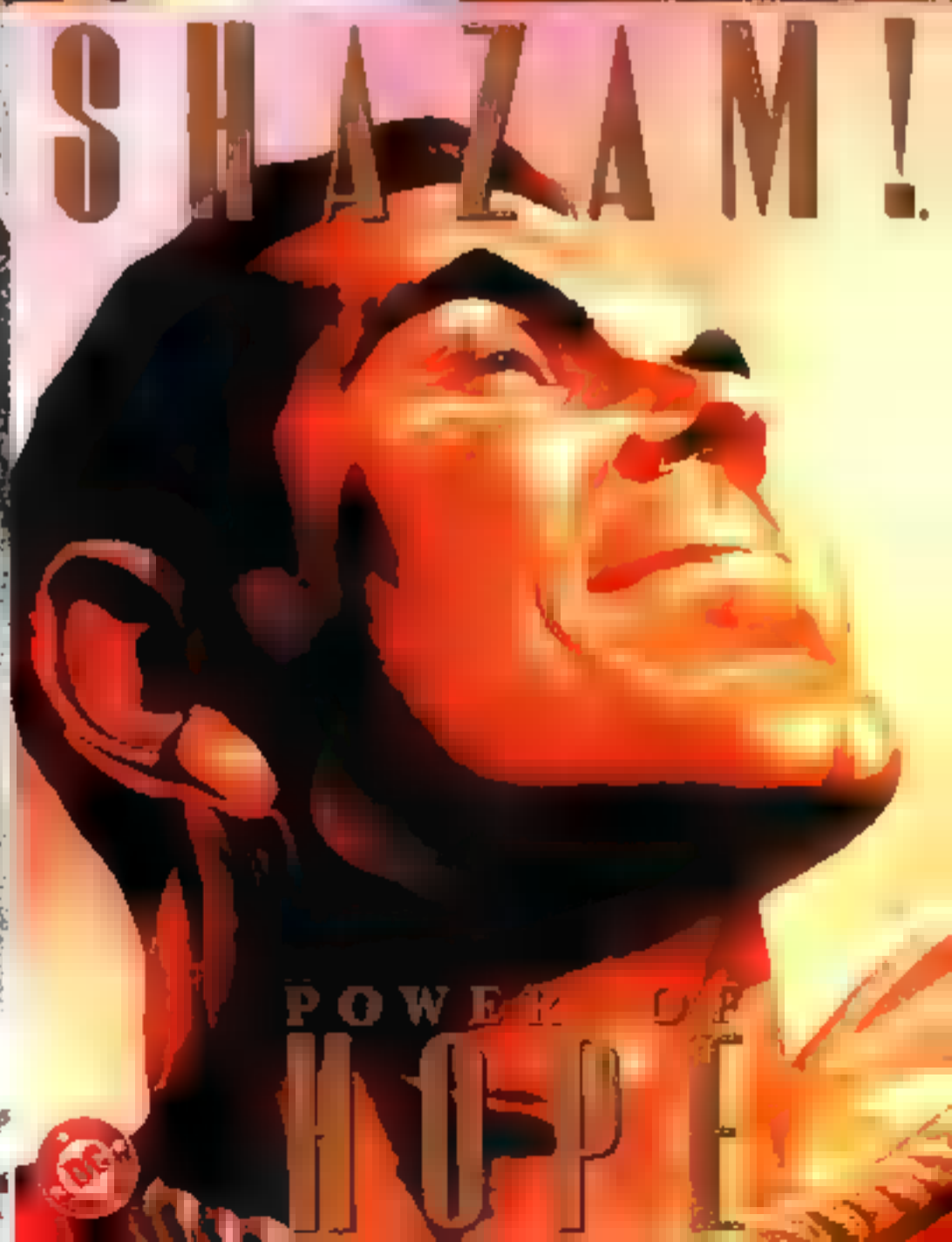
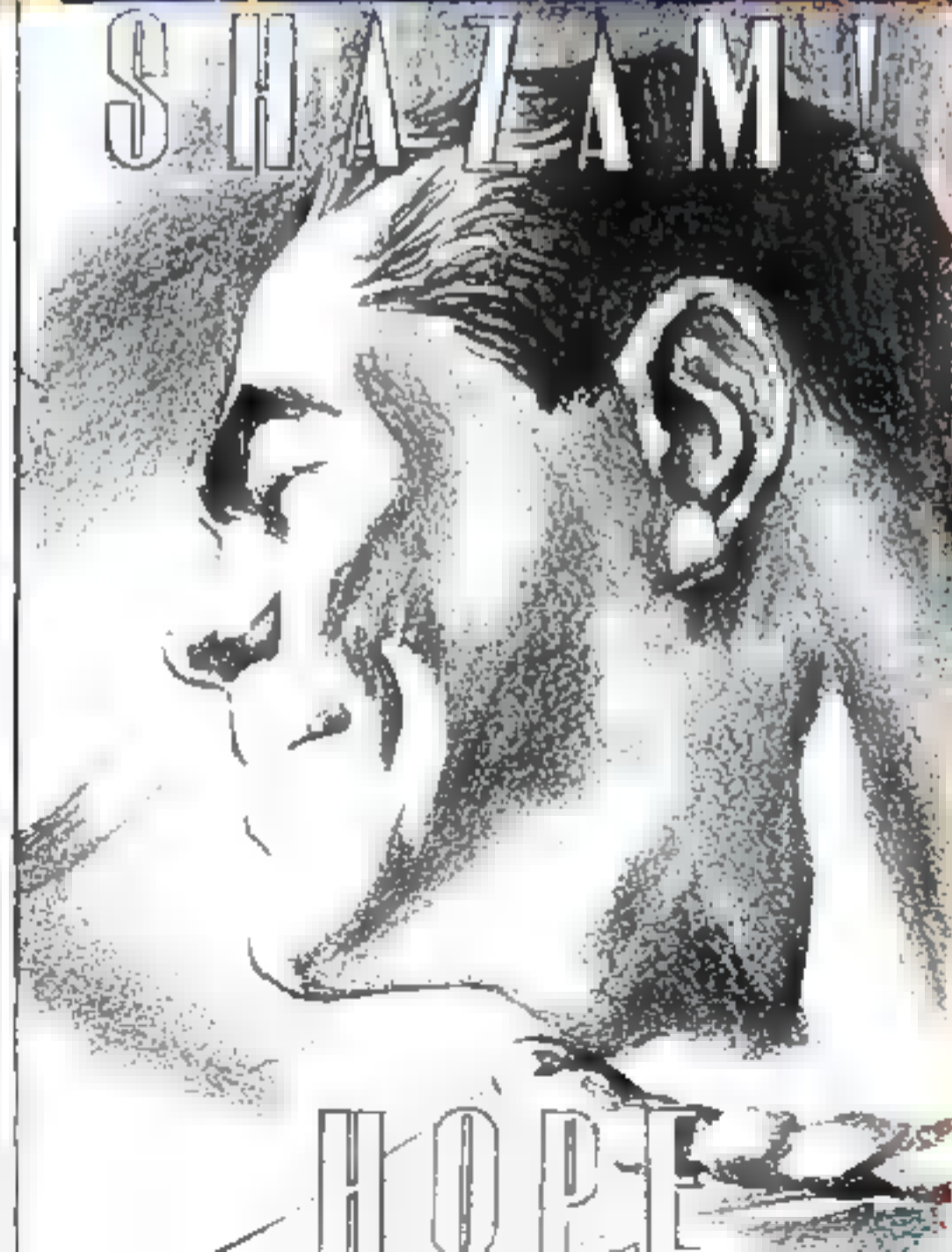


From the names of the ancients I had fashioned my own.

SOLOMON
HERCULES
ATLAS
ZEUS
ACHILLES
MERCURY

By invoking it, the boy would become the mightiest hero in the world.







"There's a sense of fun that permeates every one of Alex's paintings in this book. He really captured the essence of the caring kid inside the all-powerful hero's body. The lighter color palette also set a perfect tone for the story, differentiating it from the bold, inspirational look of *Peace on Earth*, and the somber, chilling atmosphere of *War on Crime*. It's my favorite of the books we've done so far, the one that's the most earnest and most heartfelt." —Paul Dini





SHAZAM!

(BILLY BATSON TRANSFORMING INTO CAPTAIN MARVEL)



ABOVE: Art for a Captain Marvel collector's plate (Warner Bros. Studio Store, 2000).

OPPOSITE, TOP: Billy Batson says the magic word and saves a young girl in a scene from *Shazam! Power of Hope* (2000). BELOW: Captain Marvel launches himself from the Rock of Eternity, in the final pages from *Power of Hope*. "This is my favorite spread of all the tabloid books because I feel I really nailed it—the embrace in his face, the sense of movement. Shazam's Rock of Eternity looks properly majestic. More often than not I'm very disappointed with what I do, but this is an exception." For the *Power of Hope* charity art auction, \$110,000 was raised to benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation.





BELOW: The Justice Society of America—the first grouping of DC's heroes, which debuted in *All Star Comics* #3 (Winter 1940). "This is my first commissioned lithograph for the Warner Bros. Studio Stores (1998). They gave me free rein. I realized their most sellable commodities were Superman and Batman, and I made sure I gave them that, but I figured why not give them a lot more? The original JSA lineup was changed for DC's current continuity, but I didn't have to be held to that here. I was able to show that Superman and Batman had a history with other heroes from the Golden Age of comics, but it was especially important to me to put Wonder Woman back into it. She was a distinctive member of that group in the 1940s." LEFT: The covers for *All Star Comics* #4 (March-April 1941), art by Everett Hubbard, and *All Star Comics* #36 (August-September 1947), art by Irwin Hasen, provided visual inspiration.



RIGHT: Ross depicts the Green Lantern and the Flash in their original Golden Age guises, as retail posters (DC Direct, 2001). Golden Age Green Lantern, art by Martin Nodell, and Golden Age Flash, art by Everett Hibbard, both from *Star Comics* #3 (Winter 1940). OPPOSITE: Comic book covers featuring Green Lantern and the Flash, and Ross's re-creation of them for the 27th editions of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* (1997). *Flash Comics* #1 (January 1940), art by Sheldon Moldoff, and *Green Lantern* #1 (Fall 1941), art by Howard Purcell.



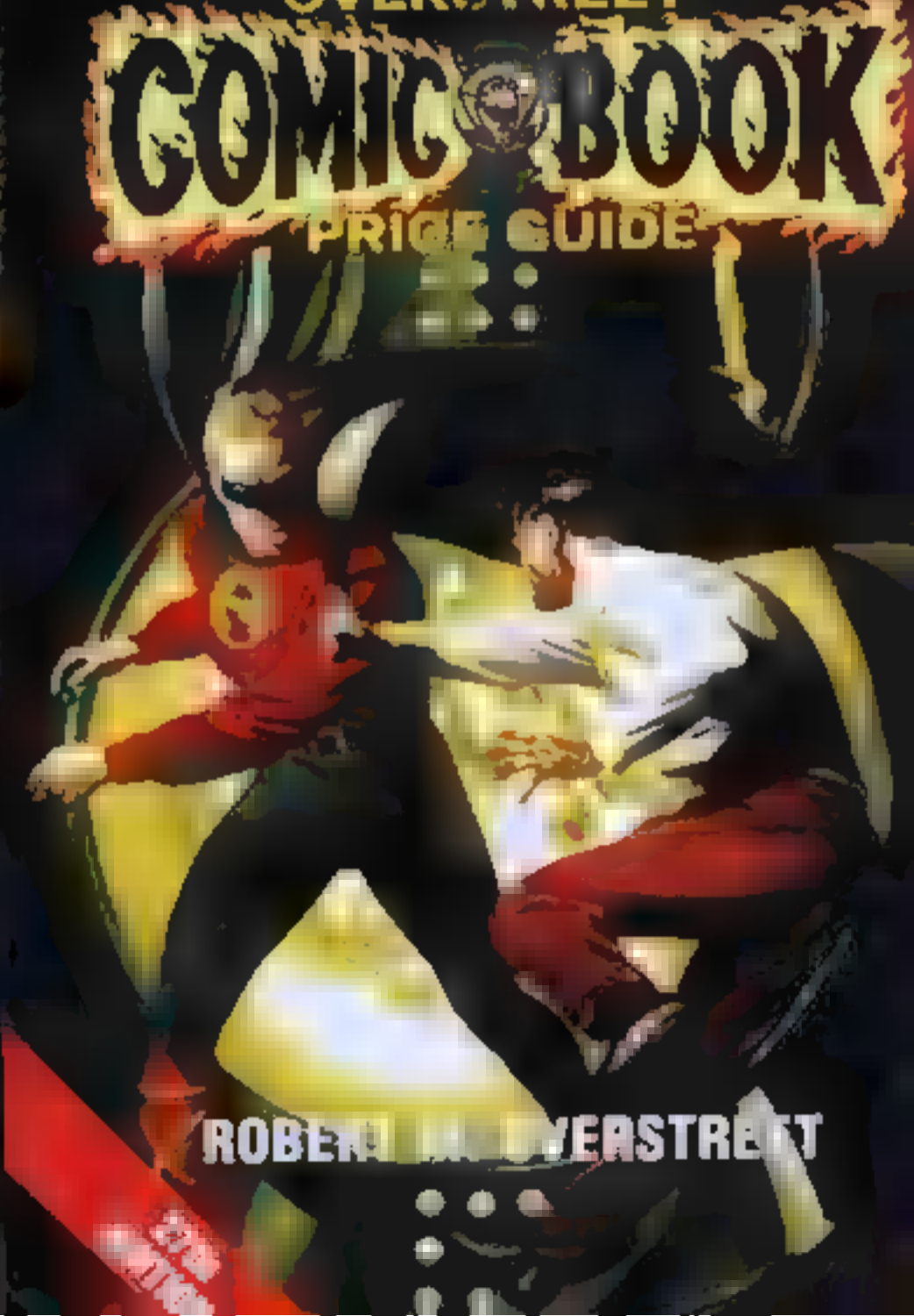
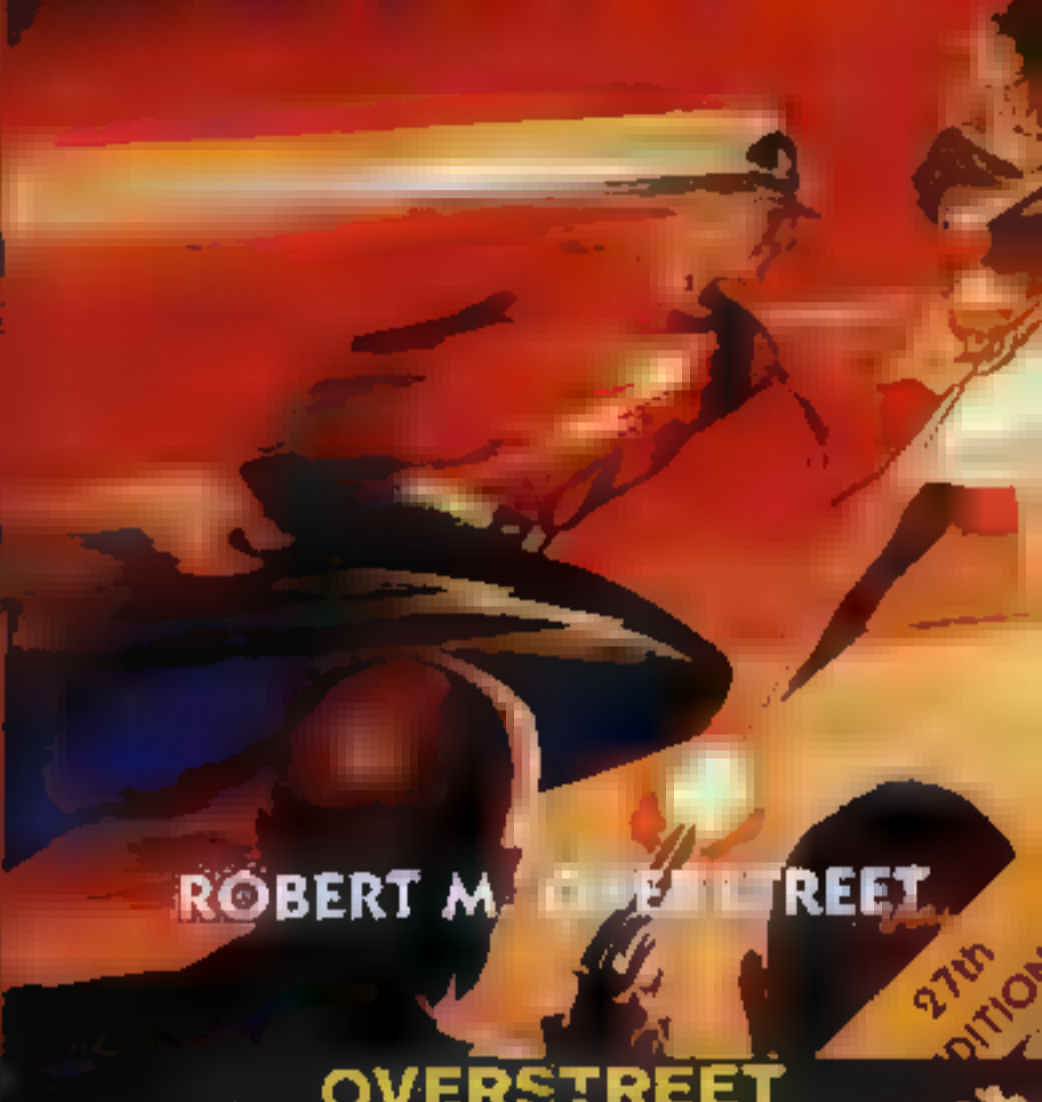
GOLDEN AGE GREEN LANTERN & FLASH.



FLASH Comics



Overstreet COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE





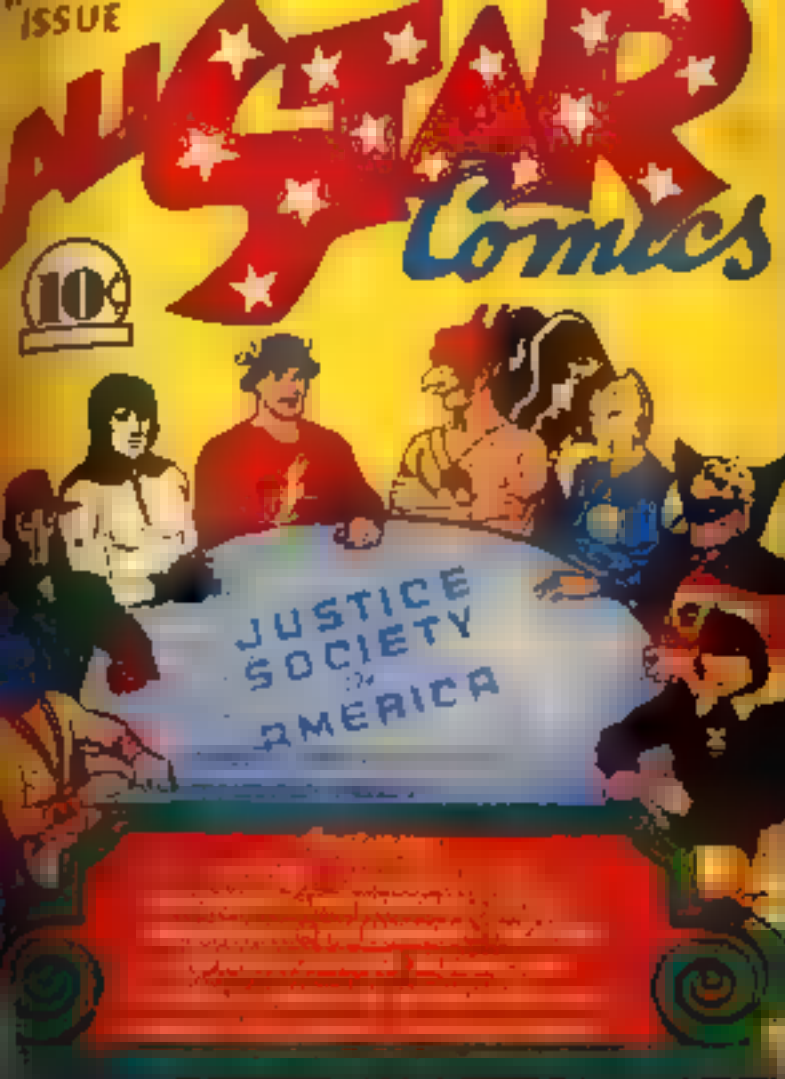
DOCTOR FATE.



THE SPECTRE.



ABOVE: Two of DC's Golden Age masters of the mystic arts, Dr. Fate and the Spectre. Retail poster art (DC Direct, 2001). TOP: Golden Age Dr. Fate, art by Howard Sherman, and Golden Age Spectre, art by Bernard Baily, both from *All Star Comics* #3 (Winter 1940).



BELOW: Ross gives Everett Ruessell's cover (left) of *All Star Comics* #3 (Molter 1948-41) a sinister spin in this stark re-creation for use in the hardcover edition of *Kingsman Come* (Graphitti Designs, 1997). BOTTOM: The Justice Society and its later group counterparts, as depicted on the back cover of *History of the DC Universe* (2002).



WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY WOULD FIND HIMSELF ROOTING FOR SOME VIGILANTE MYSTERY

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE -GHTS?

CHKCHK
CHK
CHK

TLK

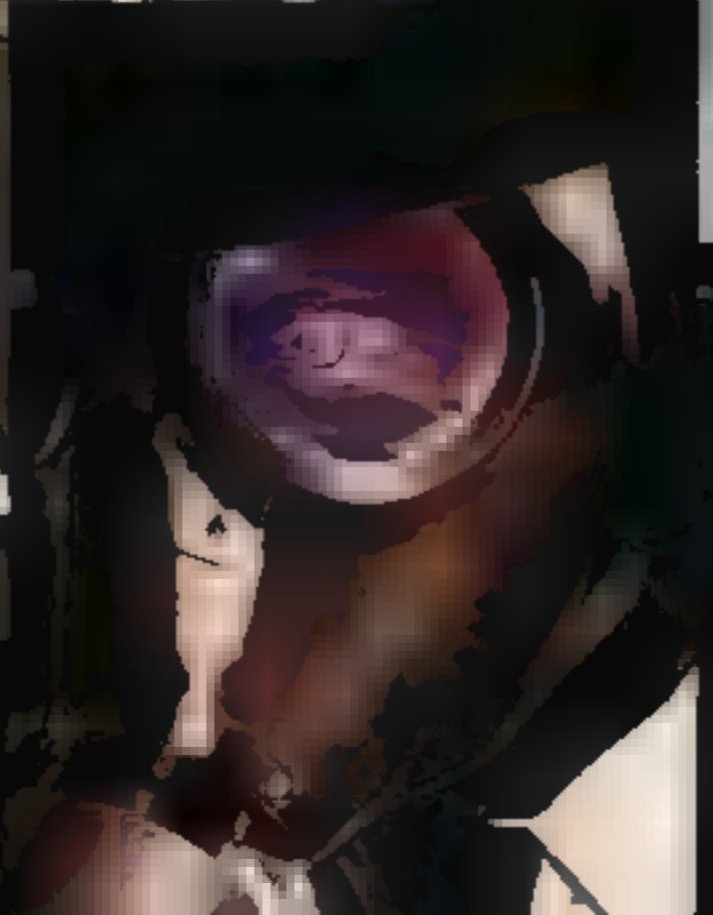
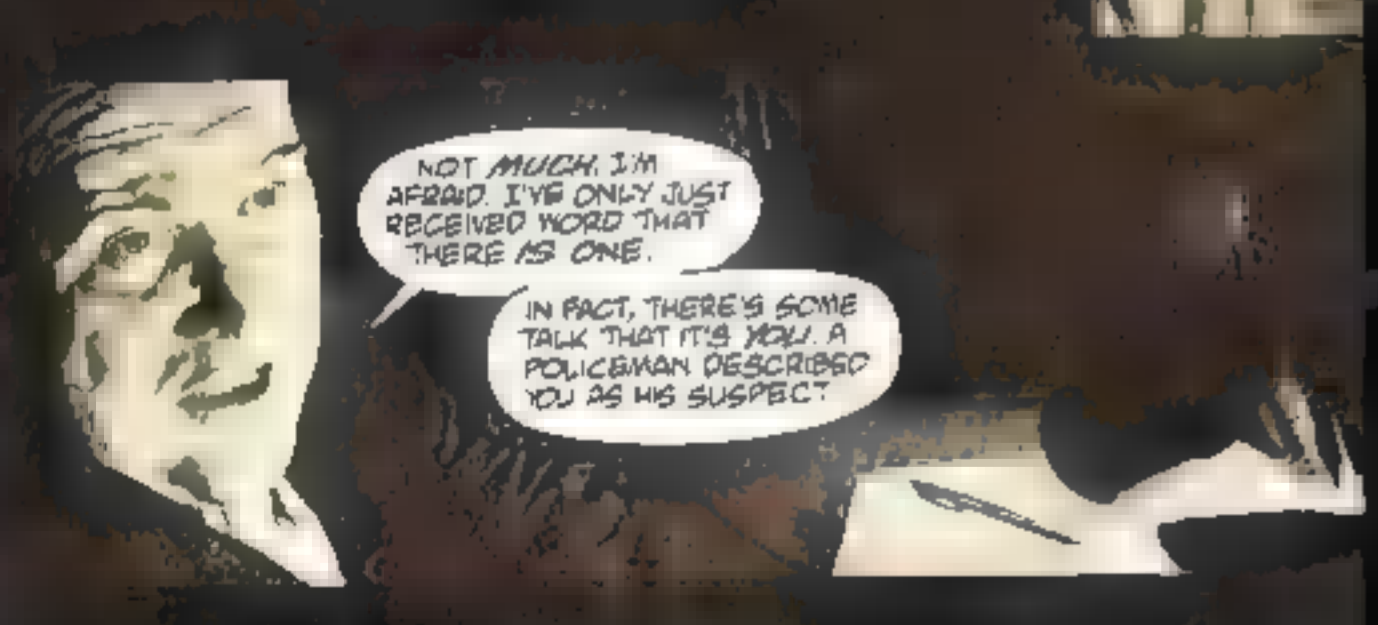
LAWRENCE BELMONT--

OH! I DON'T-- DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE. WHAT-- WHAT-- WHY ARE YOU HERE?

I COME SEEKING INFORMATION. WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF THE CENTRAL PARK MUGGER?

NOT MUCH. I'M AFRAID. I'VE ONLY JUST RECEIVED WORD THAT THERE IS ONE.

IN FACT, THERE'S SOME TALK THAT IT'S YOU. A POLICEMAN DESCRIBED YOU AS HIS SUSPECT.



THE SANDMAN.

In 1994 Ross painted an eight-page story featuring the 1940s Golden Age version of the Sandman, a mysterious figure in a gas mask who uses a vapor gun to render his foes unconscious. "It was my first illustrated story for DC Comics—a milestone for me. At the time, *Kingdom Come* was in the process of becoming a done deal, and this story was a terrific 'warm up' for it. Especially since *Kingdom Come* begins with the Golden Age Sandman, so this was a spiritual relative to the larger

project. Painting it all in black and white makes it look like an old movie serial or film noir, which was a bonus, since I paint everything in black and white first anyway. The funny thing is the model I used for this young version of the character is the same one I used for the ninety-something year-old version in *Kingdom Come*. "This story cemented the relationship with *Kingdom Come* at Vertigo, which made it easier to say 'yes' to my *Sandman* mini-series."

ABOVE: Alex's first comic book work for DC Comics, *Sandman Mystery Theatre Annual* #1 (August 1994), written by *[Name]*. RIGHT: A pin-up from *Gallery of Dreams* (1994). OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Golden Age Sandman from *All Star Comics* #1 (Winter 1940), art by Chad



ABOVE: Dr. Fate, with the Justice Society behind him, presides over a mystical convergence of trials for the Justice League. Art for the cover of *Crucible Multiverse*

Earth's trade paperback (2021) and based on the cover opposite (top) of *Justice League of America* # 29 (August 1951). Art by Mike Sekowsky and Murphy Anderson

JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA

A SUPER STAR SPECIAL! KA FEATURING THE LEGENDARY JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA "CRISIS ON EARTH-THREE"



In 1960, the Justice Society evolved into the Justice League, and the name has endured to this day. The original roster was Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, The Flash, Green Lantern, and Martian Manhunter. Throughout the years, many different characters would be added or dropped, but for the most part the core group remained intact. "I had yearned my whole life to work with this group of super heroes, growing up with them in the comics and on TV as the *Super Friends*. The impulse to combine them recalls great mythic figures like the

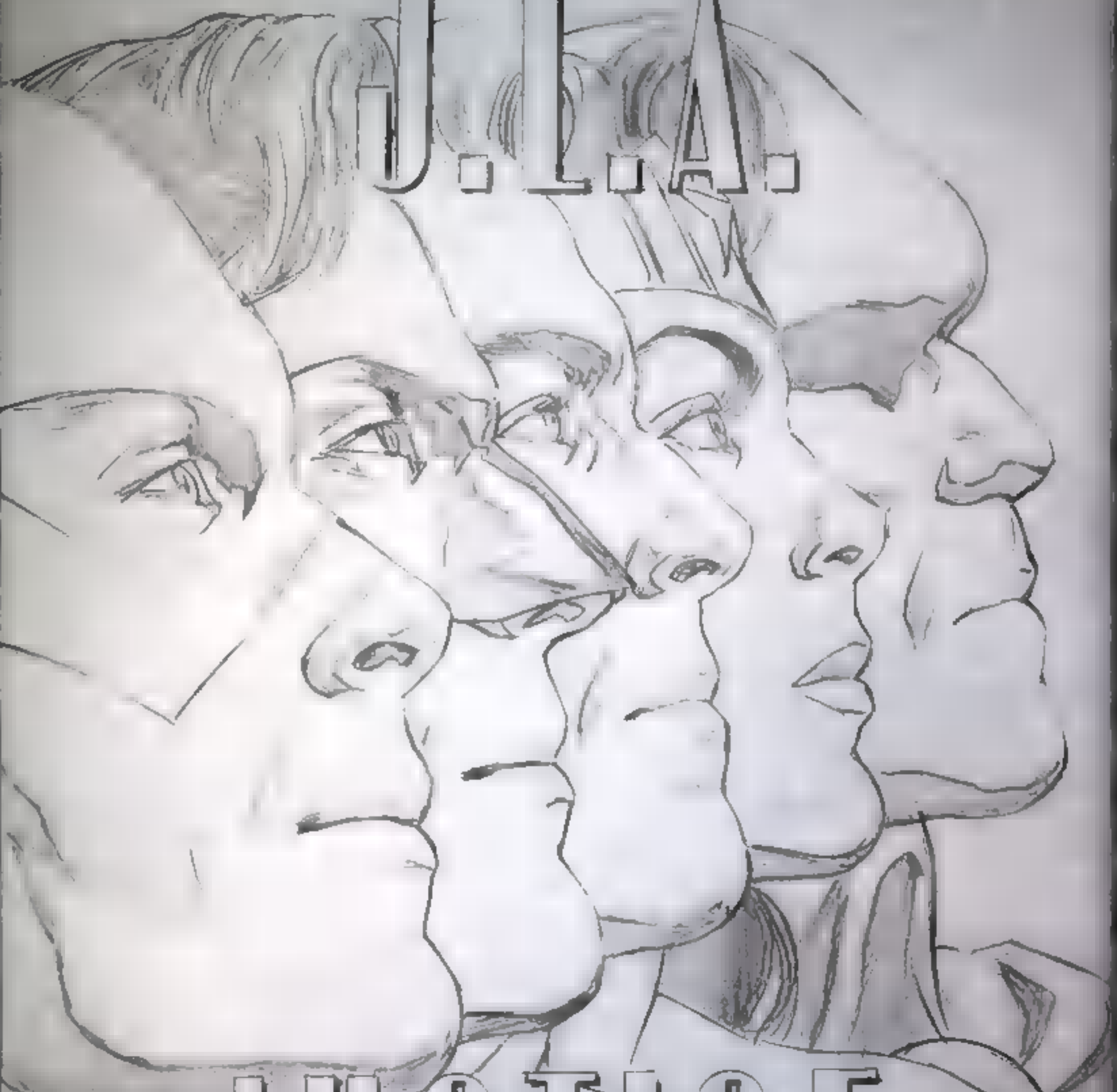
Olympian Gods." However, Ross admits the concept is unwieldy. "Yes, the team idea is impractical—they're so busy, with a richness to their individual lives, how would they find the time to meet together? And yet it's so exciting to see them as a team, how can we not?"

Maintaining the individuality of each character in a Justice League story and balancing their personalities can get tricky. "There's always been a problem with the idea that Batman, a notorious loner, would have anything to do with the group, and yet he's such a vital part of the DC mythos, we *have* to see him there. Somehow it works."



LEFT: Art for a *KA: Liberty and Justice* collector's plate (DC Direct, 2003). OVERLEAF: Promotional art for *KA: Liberty and Justice* (2003).

JULIA



JUSTICE

FOR ALL

OPPOSITE: Unused cover concept from 2001 for *JLA: Liberty and Justice*. BELOW: Cover art for *JLA: Secret Origins* (2002).



THE JUSTICE LEAGUE.

Queen II



ABOVE: The iconic comic book cover for *Queen II* (1978), photographed by Mick Rock) has been an inspiration to Ross since he first saw it as a child. "My favorite band, and my favorite comic book cover. I stole the lighting technique and the figure placement to make what is probably the most popular group shot of the Justice League I've done yet, 'The Original Seven'" (overleaf). ABOVE RIGHT: An early sample for DC editors Neal Pozner and Mike Carlin featuring the Justice League (1977). This would eventually form the basis for *JLA: The Original Seven* (overleaf). RIGHT: Ross's first commission to paint the DC Universe, for use as a retail poster (1994).



OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: A group shot of the Justice League on the steps of the Capitol building, for the cover of *Wizard* #75 (November 1997); BELOW: A montage of the origins of DC's main heroes, for the front cover of *History of the DC Universe* (2002).





THE SEVEN

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Pencils for the Warner Bros. Studio Store Cliche print, *JLA: The Original Seven* (2002).
ABOVE: The final art.



ABOVE: The JLA on their satellite, in battle—a scene originally from *Justice League of America* #143 (June 1977). "A nice big knock-down drag-out with a supervillain enemy team, the Injustice Gang of the World. A precursor to the Legion of Doom." This panel, turned on its side, is a detail from a page of *JLA: Liberty and Justice* (2013).

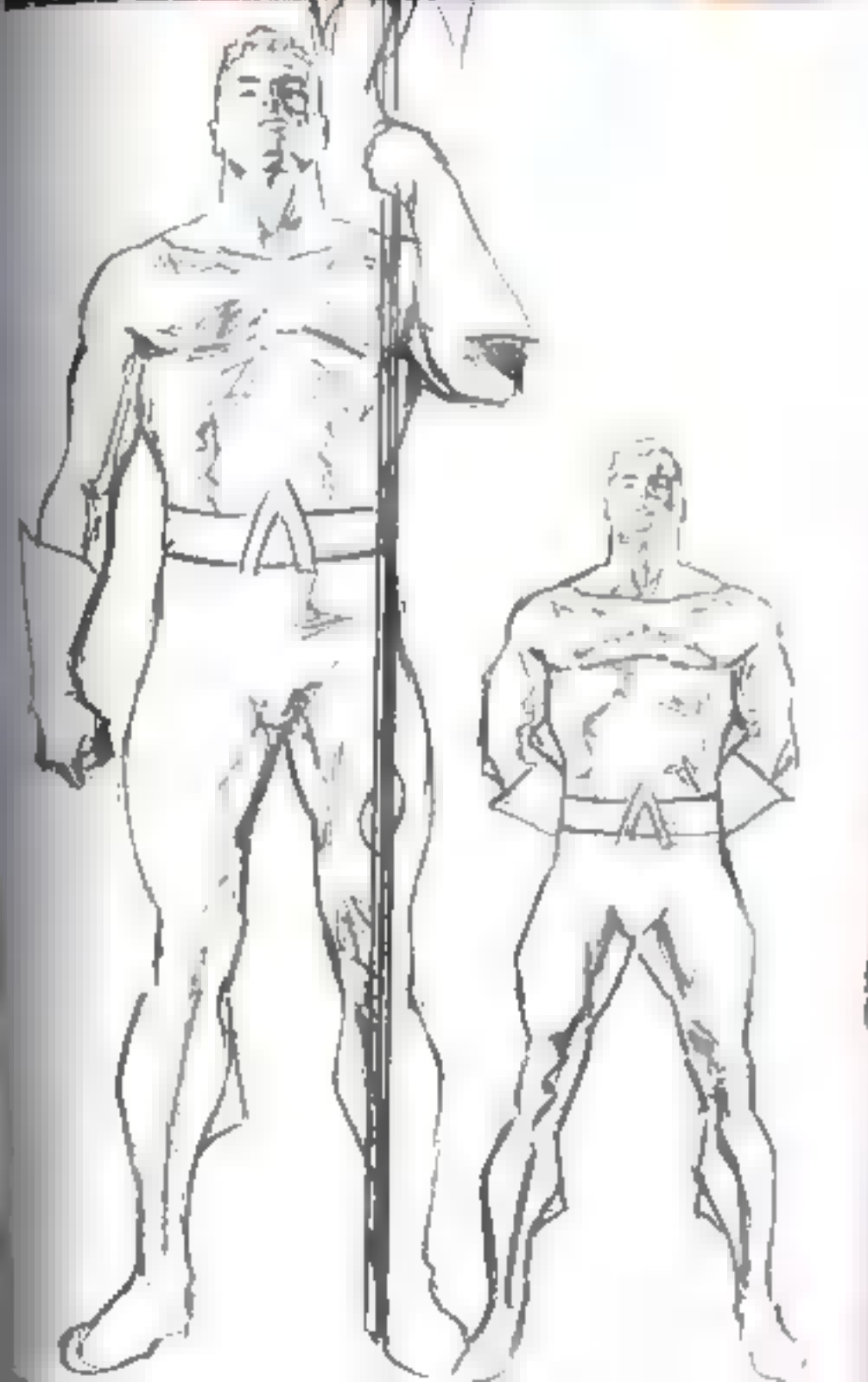
AQUAMAN.

...the deep—Aquaman, the King of the Seven Seas—
...with telepathic control over all oceanic
...of his biological
...his challenge of drawing him is how to prove that a
...character evokes belief and scores emotionally beyond what
...with his scales as it could be majestic
...a golden Aquaman
...the first DC character to combine
...and married to Mera, the
...father (Arthur Jr.) and son of that, he





OPPOSITE: Detail from the origin of Aquaman, from *JLA: Secret Origins* (2002). LEFT: Aquaman in the Golden Age, from his debut in *More Fun Comics* #73 (November 1941). Art by Paul Norris. BELOW LEFT: Sketches for an Aquaman retail poster, and (below) the finished art (DC Direct, 2001).







OPPOSITE: Aquaman confronts some suspicious whalers in this beautiful scene from *JLA: Liberty and Justice* (2003). ABOVE: On the cover of *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (March 1960), the Justice League versus one of their first major villains, the dastardly Starro the Conqueror, a giant starfish with nefarious plans to take over the world (yes, you read that correctly). Art by Mike Sekowsky and Murphy Anderson. Ross re-creates the scene (right), but depicts it from Starro's point of view, in a flashback from *JLA: Liberty and Justice* (2003).

The last of the "tabloid books," 2003's *JLA: Liberty and Justice*, wraps up the series and marks the accomplishment of one of Ross's lifelong goals. "I've wanted to do a book starring the classic 1960s version of the Justice League since childhood—it's one of things I dreamt of. *Liberty and Justice* allows me to make these characters work as a group of distinguished, accomplished supermen, and to make it seem logical that the only way they can overcome a foe, in this case a deadly virus, is by working together. I really tried to bring them to life."

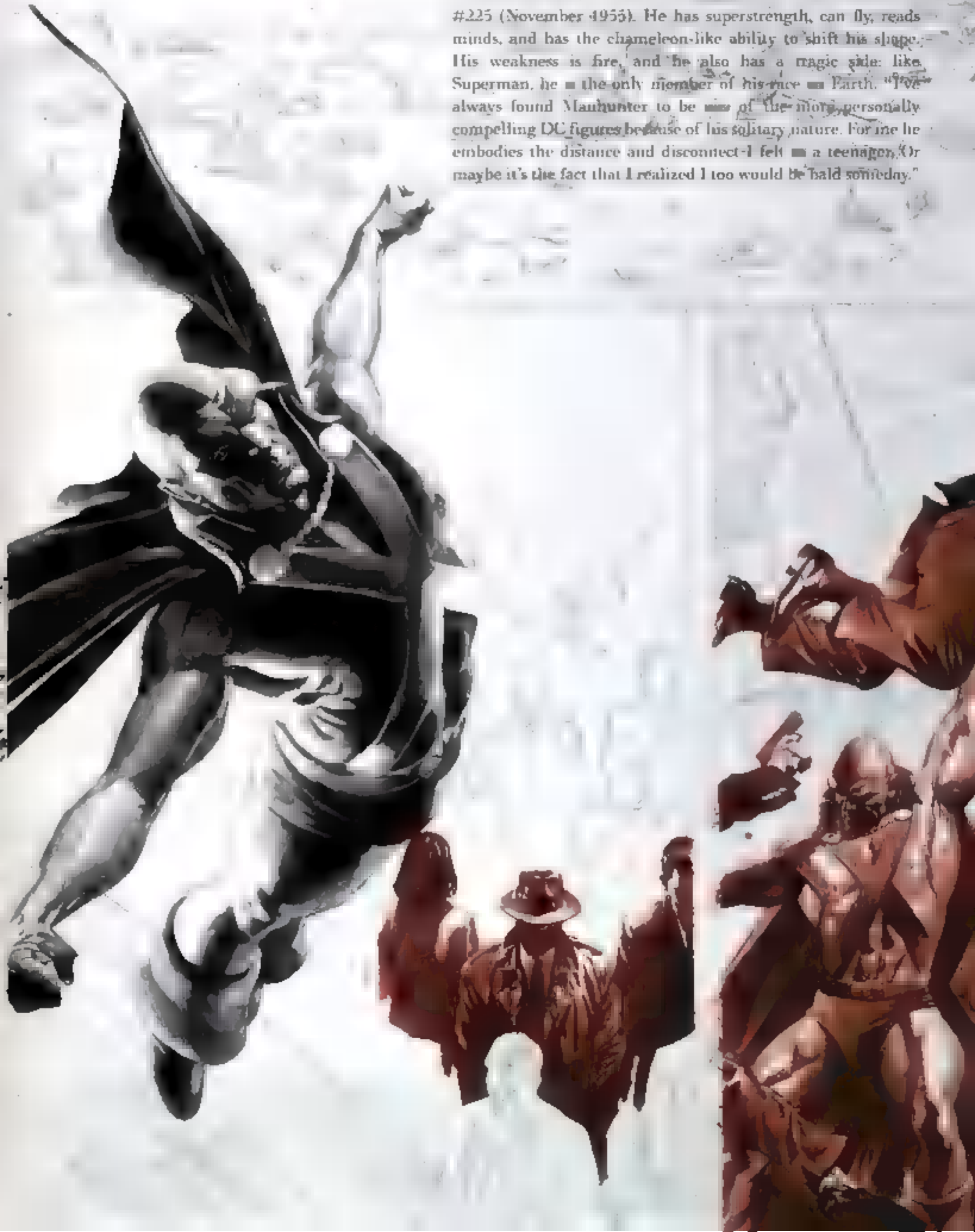


A work in progress, and a... of this... from the... of John J'onzz... appeared in *JLA: Secret Origins* (2002). RIGHT: Art for the Martian Manhunter retail poster (DC, 2000). BELOW: A panel from the first Martian Manhunter story in *Detective Comics* (November 1955). Art by Joe Certa. BOTTOM: John J'onzz in flight, a detail from *JLA* (2000).



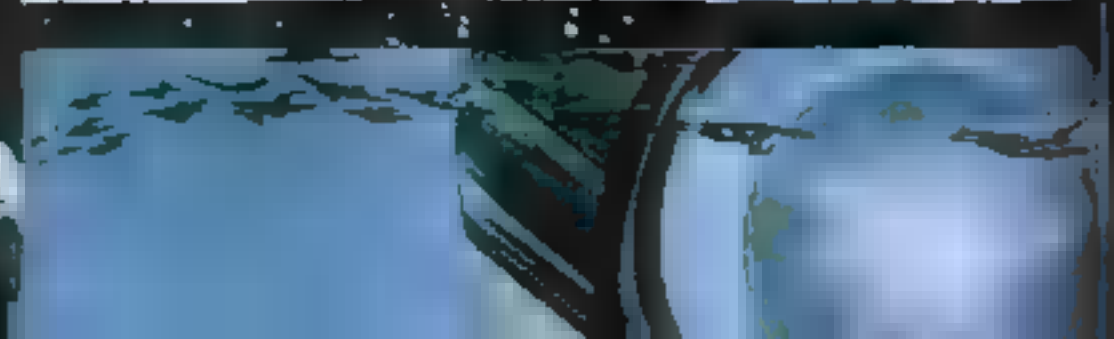
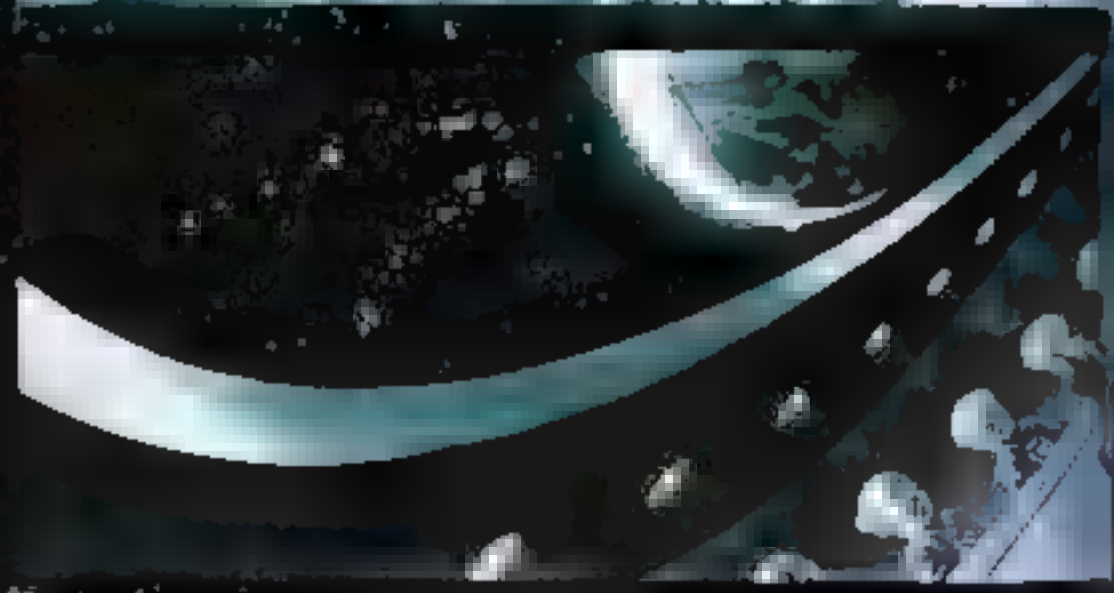
MARTIAN MANHUNTER.

Otherwise known as J'onn J'onzz (pronounced "John Jones") the Manhunter from Mars made his debut in *Detective Comics* #225 (November 1953). He has superstrength, can fly, reads minds, and has the chameleon-like ability to shift his shape. His weakness is fire, and he also has a magic side: like Superman, he is the only member of his race on Earth. "I've always found Manhunter to be one of the more personally compelling DC figures because of his solitary nature. For me he embodies the distance and disconnect I felt as a teenager. Or maybe it's the fact that I realized I too would be bald someday."



GREEN LANTERN

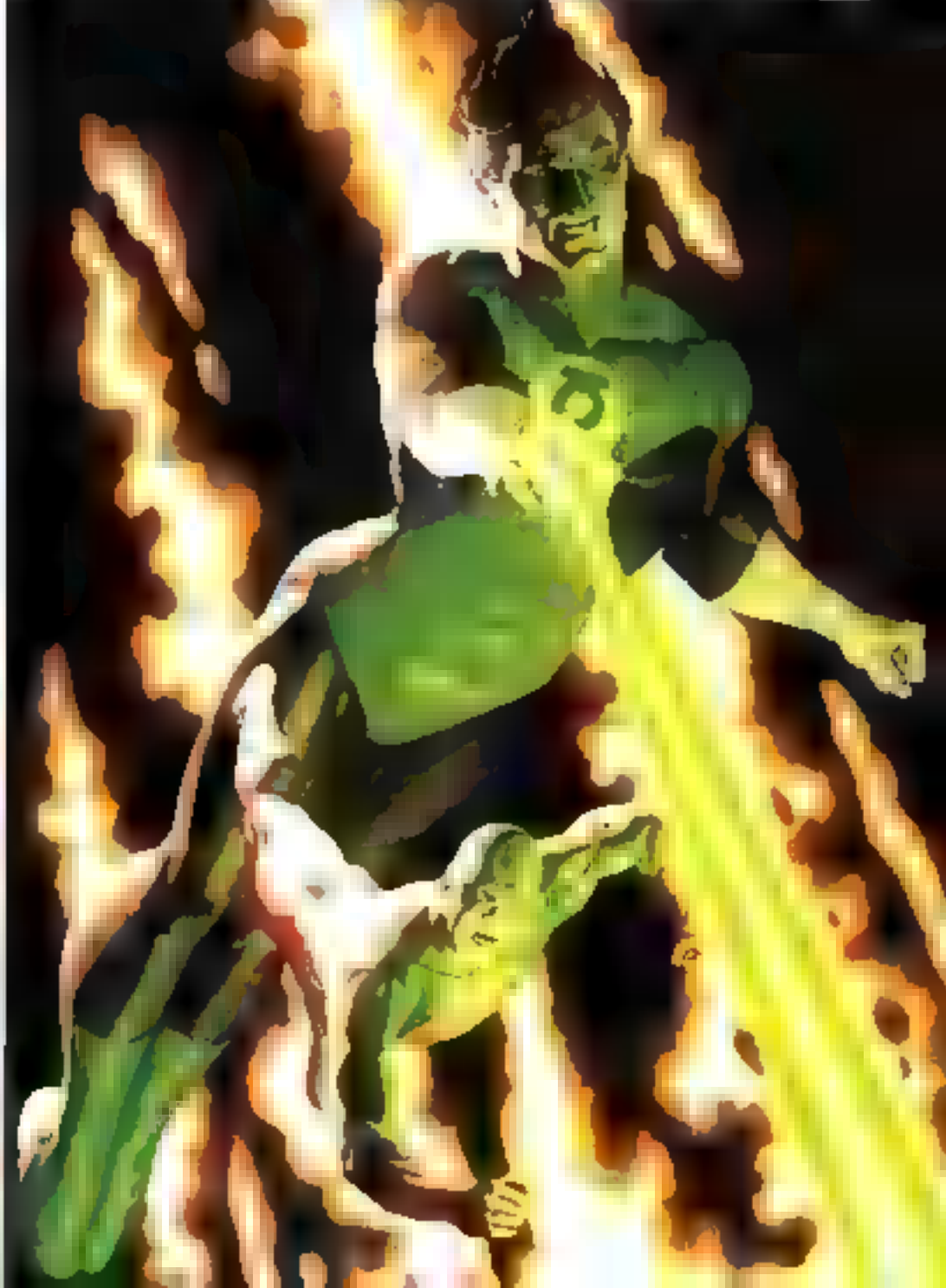
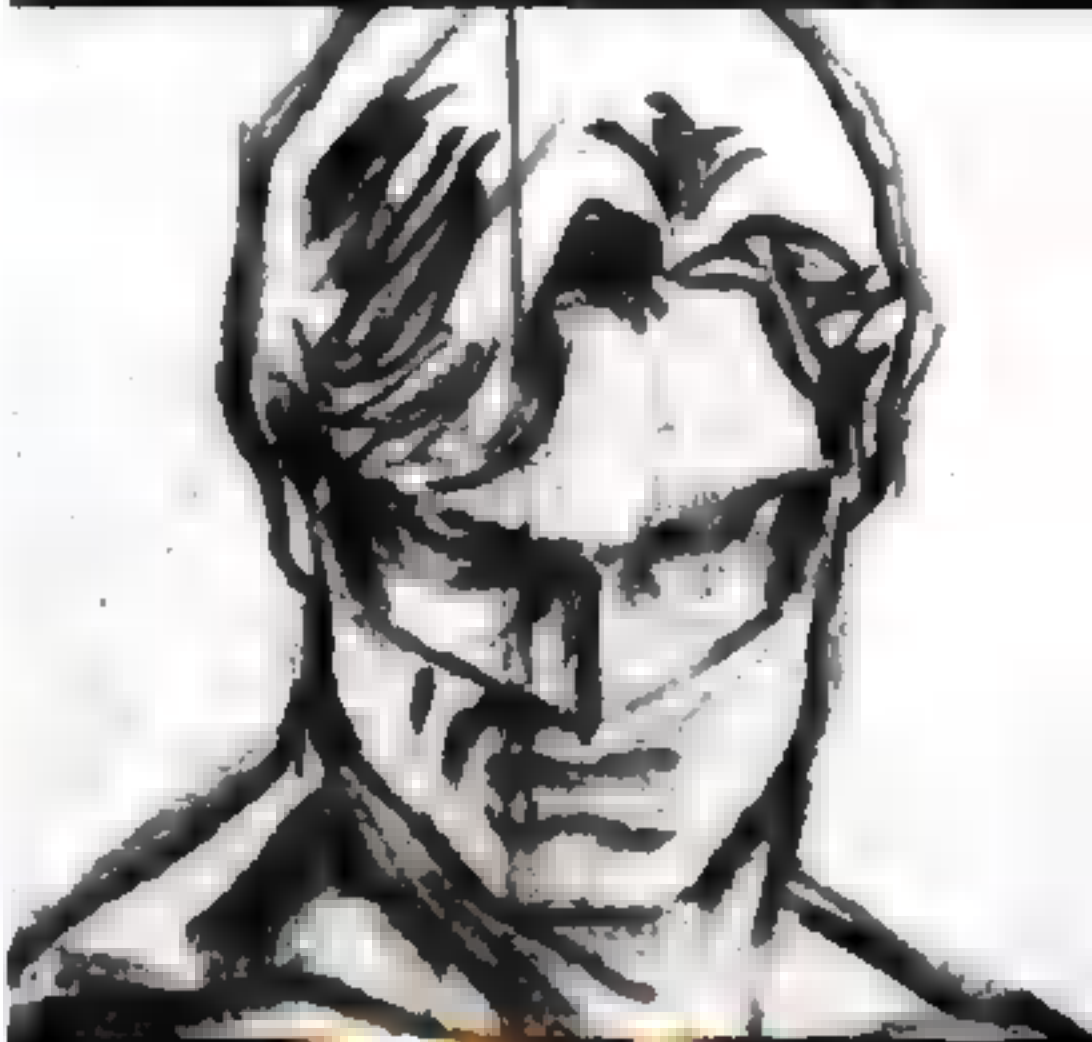
The diverse group of aliens from all over the universe that makes up the Green Lantern Corps (left) speeds through the cosmos in this detail from the origin of Green Lantern, from *AA Secret Origins* (2002). The art is shown here rotated ninety degrees counter-clockwise.





ABOVE: Art for Green Lantern retail poster (DC Direct, 2000). UPPER RIGHT: Pencils for same. RIGHT: Ross's collaboration with Gil Kane for the cover of *Legends of the DC Universe* #28 (May 2000).

...power comes from a ring that might be changed, eye-
...-ear horns, bequeathed to him by an ancient order of
...galactic elders. There have been several Green Lanterns
...the years, but his Silver Age alter ego, Hal Jordan, is the
...favorite. "There's a unique aesthetic value to the Hal
...Jordan Green Lantern that sets him apart from all the other
...heroes—he wears green, and he has brown hair, which everyone
...a fair blond or black hair and blue eyes. And the white
...eyes—a super hero with white gloves? Not to mention, and it
...looks beautiful in all the colors of the GL Corps. You can
...a new life-form to that suit and it's instantly recognizable. GL



PLASTIC MAN.



He twists, he stretches, he bends; he can mold himself into any household object imaginable and do it with a smile. Jack Cole's 1941 creation remains one of the all-time comics greats. "Plastic Man was the first to combine humor and the super hero genres, and I think he's the best. The liquid nature of his body is his defense against taking any of it too seriously. He exploits himself in ways none of the other characters ever do, plus he's just plain sneaky. That his eyes are always hidden only adds to that quality."

Illustration: Plastic Man by Jack Cole from *Plastic Man* #2 (August 1944). **Illustration:** Ross re-creates the character in 1995 detail using the image of Plastic Man from *Secret Origins* (2002). **Illustration:** Plastic Man retail poster (DC Direct, 2002).





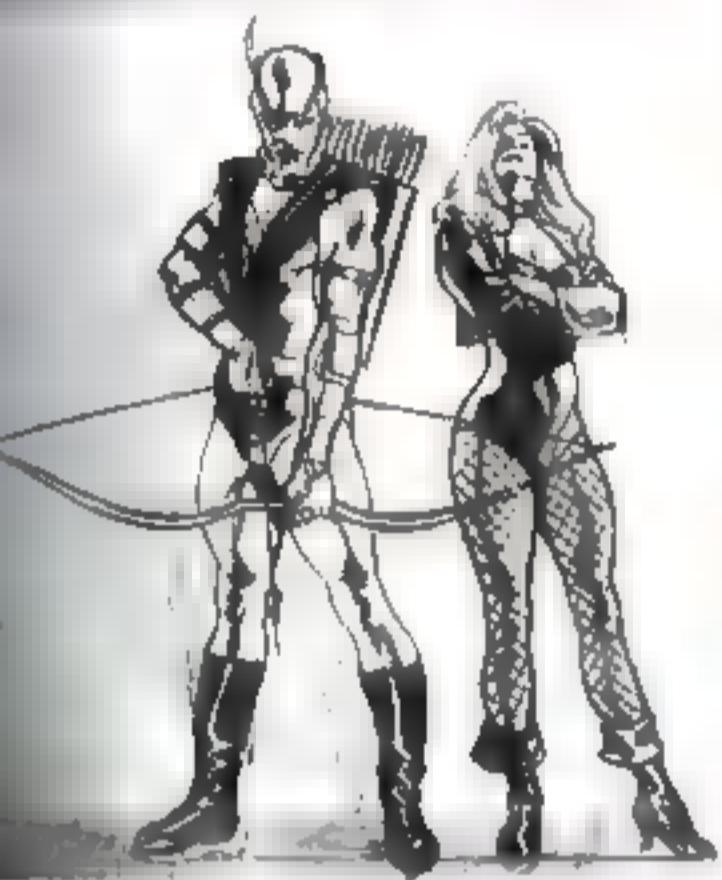
LEFT: Pencil rough for Plastic Man retail poster (DC Direct 2000). ABOVE AND BELOW: Sketches and the final art for a Plastic Man collector's plate, released by the Warner Bros. Studio Store (2000).



GREEN ARROW.



OPPOSITE: ■ detail of the origin of Green Arrow (seen here with his teen ■■■■■, Speedy) from *JLA: Secret Origins* (2002). ■■■■■ LEFT: Pencil ■■■■■ of ■■■■■ Arrow with his fellow ■■■■■ Leaguer ■■■■■ love ■■■■■. Black Canary. ■■■■■ ■■■■■ Green Arrow retail poster (DC ■■■■■, ■■■■■). BOTTOM RIGHT: ■■■■■ Arrow as drawn by Neal Adams, from *Green Lantern* #76 (April 1970).



The Robin Hood of the DC pantheon, Green Arrow made his first appearance inside the pages of *More Fun Comics* #75 (November 1941). In the late-1960s he got his “new look” courtesy of artist Neal Adams and became the de facto super hero voice of the Left. Featured in several ground-breaking stories co-starring Green Lantern and written by Dennis O’Neil in the early 1970s, the alter ego of Oliver Queen took ■■■■ topics such ■■■■ racism and drug abuse—material previously unexplored in mainstream super hero comics. “Another personal favorite—he’s the voice of the concerned liberal of all comics, speaking out against the vanity of what goes on around him in super hero culture.

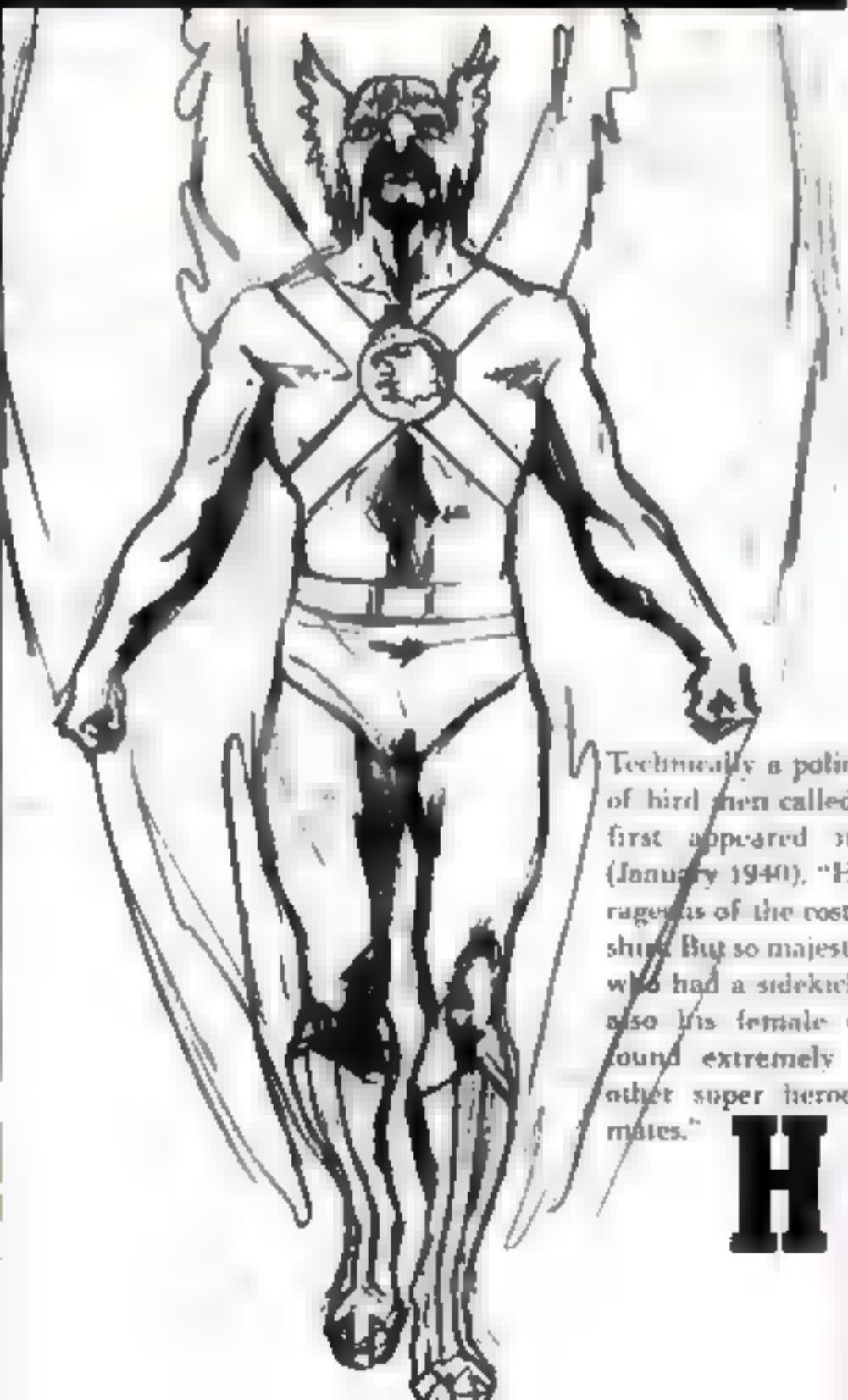
“To render him without thinking of Neal Adams seems impossible. Adams brought to him a goatee, which for some reason made him stand ■■■■ as a hippie. He’s the first hippie super hero.”





THE HEAT IS MADDENING. HOW ANYONE
COULD LIVE HERE
IS BEYOND
ME!

ABOVE: An early appearance by Hawkman, from *All Star Comics* #3 (Winter 1940). Art by Sheldon Moldoff. BELOW: Pencil sketch for the Hawkman retail poster (2000)



Technically a policeman from the planet of bird men called Thanagar, Hawkman first appeared in *Flash Comics* #1 (January 1940). "His seems the most outrageous of the costumes—the helmet, no shirt. But so majestic. He was the only one who had a sidekick (Hawkgirl) who was also his female counterpart, which I found extremely appealing—I wished other super heroes also had costumed mates."

HAWKMAN.



ABOVE: Art for the Hawkman retail poster (DC Direct, 2000). Note the cameo by the Atom.

The Mercury of the DC Comics mythos, the Flash is the Fastest Man Alive, thanks to a laboratory accident that bathed scientist Barry Allen in a storm full of chemicals that were struck by lightning. Allen emerged with the power of super-speed. The Flash was reintroduced with a new look in 1958, ushering in the "Silver Age" of comics. The revised character design was by artist Carmine Infantino. It's one of the greatest refinements of a costume. In Infantino's hands the Flash became something much greater than the Mercury of his inspiration. A much cleaner graphic than he was in the Golden Age. One of the few married members of the Justice League, the Flash has, as Ross puts it, "The sense of being a just a 'regular' guy." That goes to his appeal.

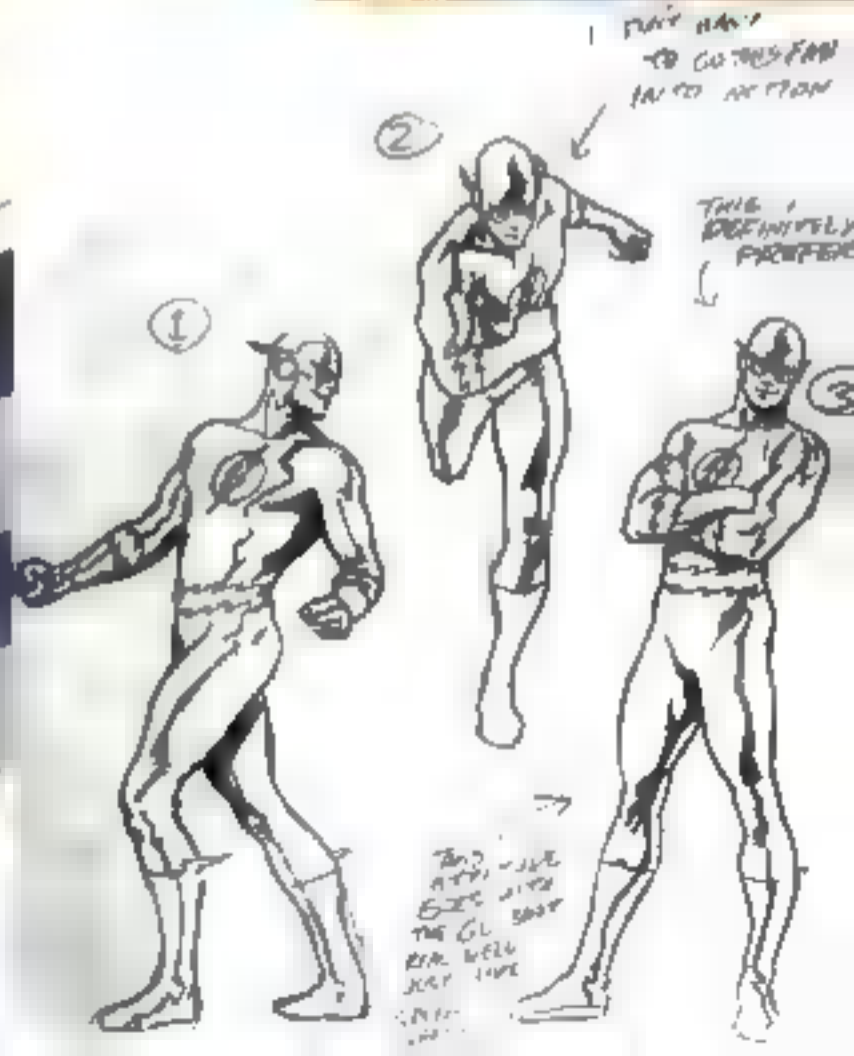
THE FLASH.

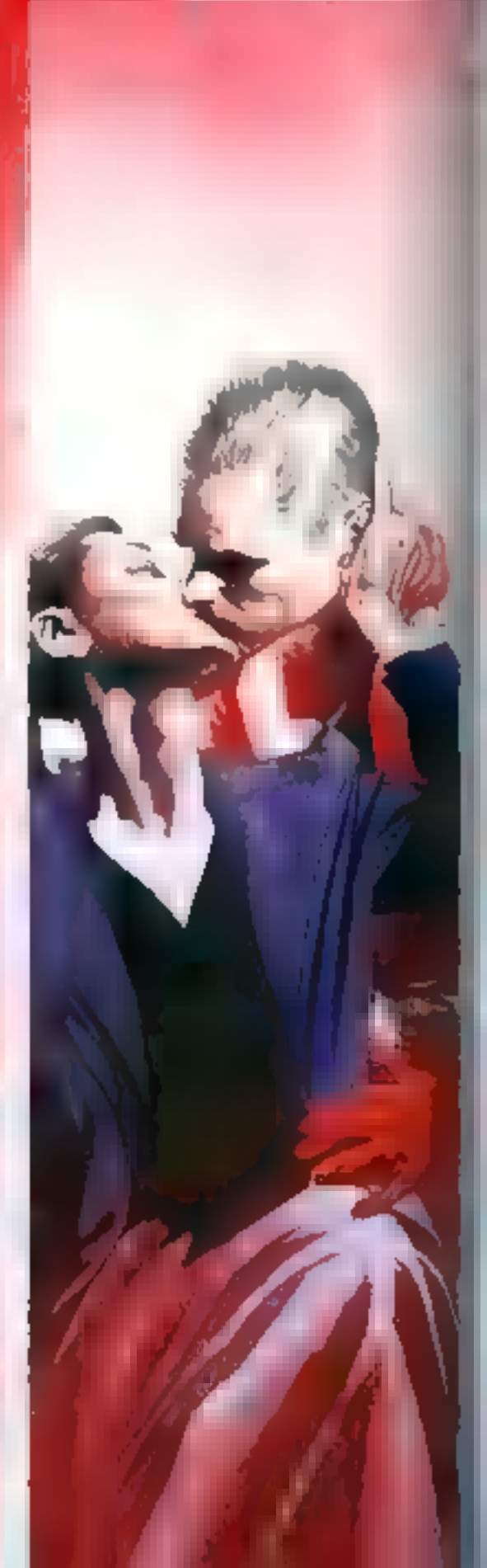


Above: A detail from the origin of the Flash from *DC Secret Origins* (2002). **BELOW:** The Flash whisks some would-be bank robbers to safety in this detail from *DC from *DC Liberty and Justice* (2003)*. **LOWER RIGHT:** Pencils for the Flash retail poster (2000).

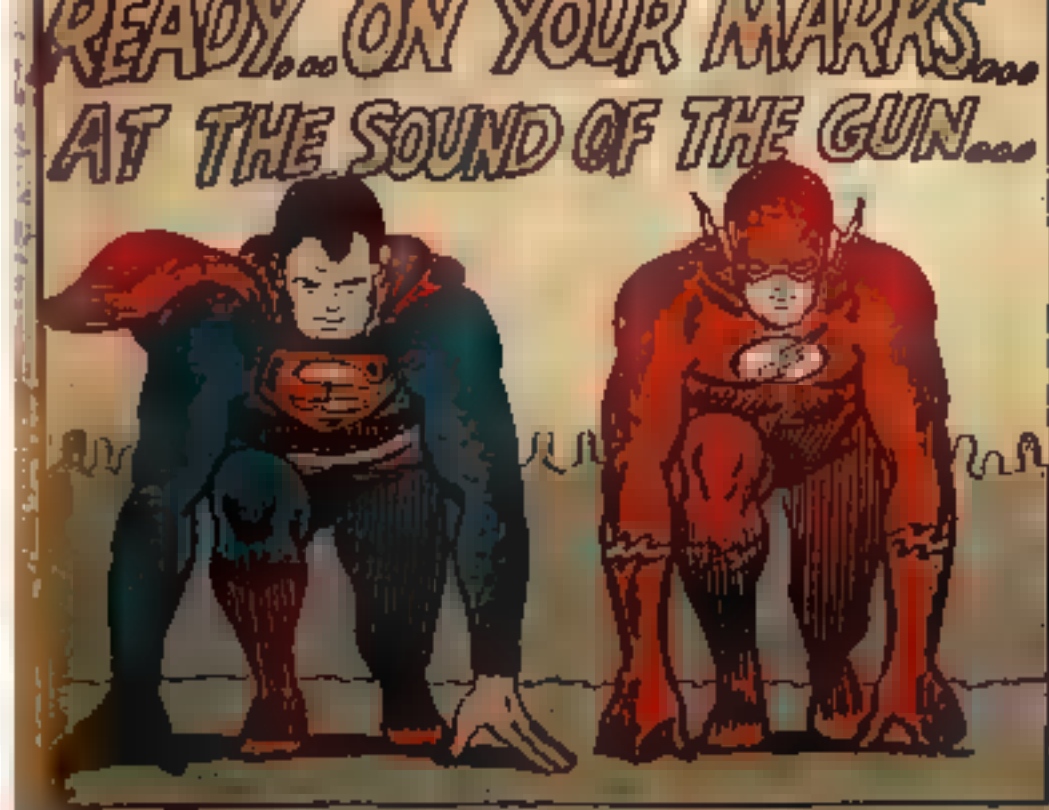


Above: The Silver Age Flash races his Golden Age counterpart on this cover for the *Flash* #123 (September 1961). Art by Carmine Infantino and Joe Giella.





Opposite: ■ detail ■ ■ ■ origin of the Flash, from *JLA: Secret Origins* (2002). RIGHT: Art for ■ Flash retail poster (DC Direct, 2000).



TIP: The Fastest Man Alive races the Man of Steel, from *Superman vs. The Flash* (October-November 1976). Art by Carl Swan and George Klein. ABOVE: Ross re-interpreted the scene in 2001 for a collector's plate.

ZATANNA.

Master magician Zatanna is the daughter of Zatara, an early DC character from the Golden Age. The model for her art was [unclear] for Ross to work with. "This is my [unclear], [unclear] as one of [unclear] characters. And 'T.J.' is [unclear] character."



SUPERGIRL.

She's Superman's Kryptonian cousin, and she has had many different outfit designs since her comics debut in *Superman* #125 (August 1958). All were variations of her famous kinsman's. "This is the version of her costume I first saw in the mid-1970s. There's a sexiness to it that also considers her individuality, as a young woman who wants to fit in on Earth."



BATGIRL.

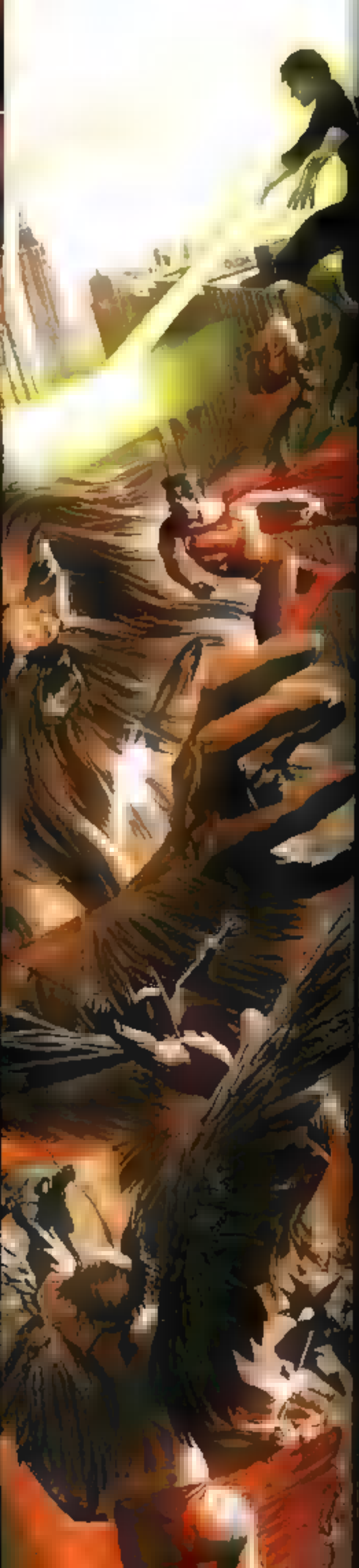
There have been several versions of Batgirl, but her 1966 incarnation, based on the Batman television series of that year, is the most familiar. "The biggest distinction [between her and Batman] is that the inside of her cape is yellow. But otherwise she was way ahead of the Dark Knight with her black body suit, something he would acquire much later in the movies. She also throws Robin into sharp relief, because she looks so much more like Batman than he does."

BLACK CANARY.

One of the most notable of the female Justice Leaguers, Black Canary's history dates back to 1947, when she was originally a member of the Justice Society. She's romantically linked to Green Arrow, and uses her sonic scream to incapacitate foes. "I've been telling [unclear] for years that we should do a book called *Black Canary and Zatanna: Power of Women*," says [unclear] Paul Dini, "and I [unclear] telling him."



FAR RIGHT: The Justice League battles the Shaggy Man, in this panel from *JLA: Liberty and Justice* (2003). It's an homage to a scene (center) that appeared in *Justice League* #1 (February 1973), by Nick I...
 RIGHT: The cover of *Metal Men* #1 (April-May 1963). Art by Ross Andru and Mike...
 OPPOSITE: ... poster for *JLA: Liberty and Justice* (DC Direct, 2003), seen here on its side.



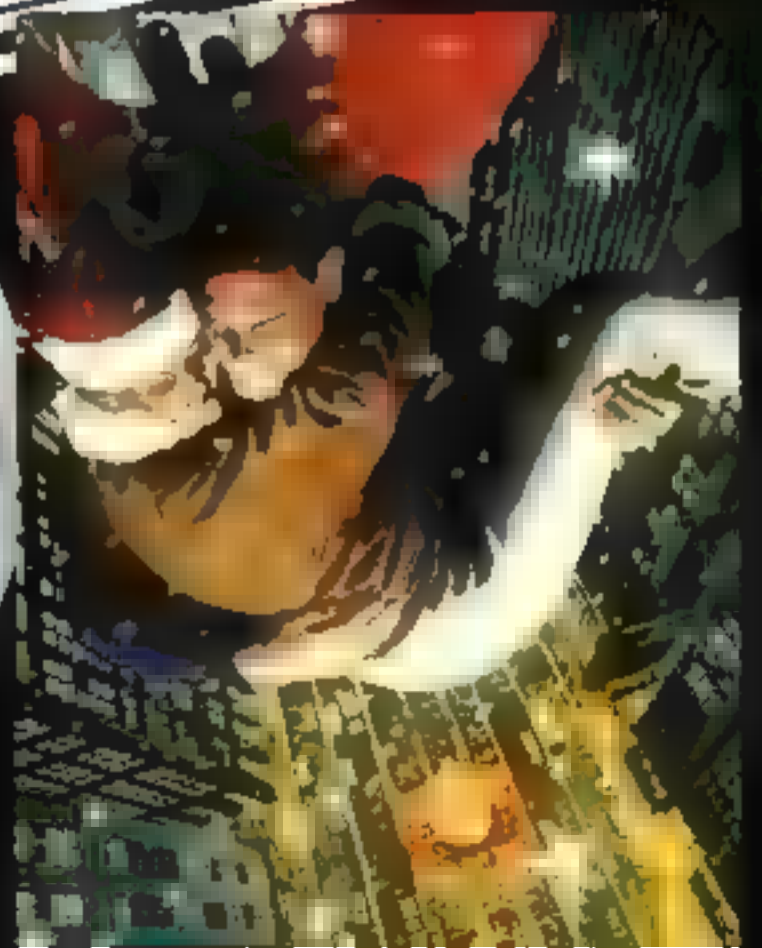
THE METAL MEN.



Shape-shifting androids, each named for a different element, the Metal Men debuted in *Showcase* #57 (April 1962). Ross jumped at the chance to paint them when given an open-ended commission to create a collector's plate in 1999. "The most amazing thing about it is that I convinced the Warner Bros. Studio Store to let me do it. The characters are so totally obscure—but just bursting with personality and ripe for someone to have fun with."







ABOVE: Batman is out in the cold in this scene from a Warner Bros. Studio Store yuletide collector's plate (2000). An unused sketch for it (right) presents a more inclusive scenario. FAR RIGHT: Superman and Lois Lane soar over Metropolis, from DC's company Christmas card (1997).



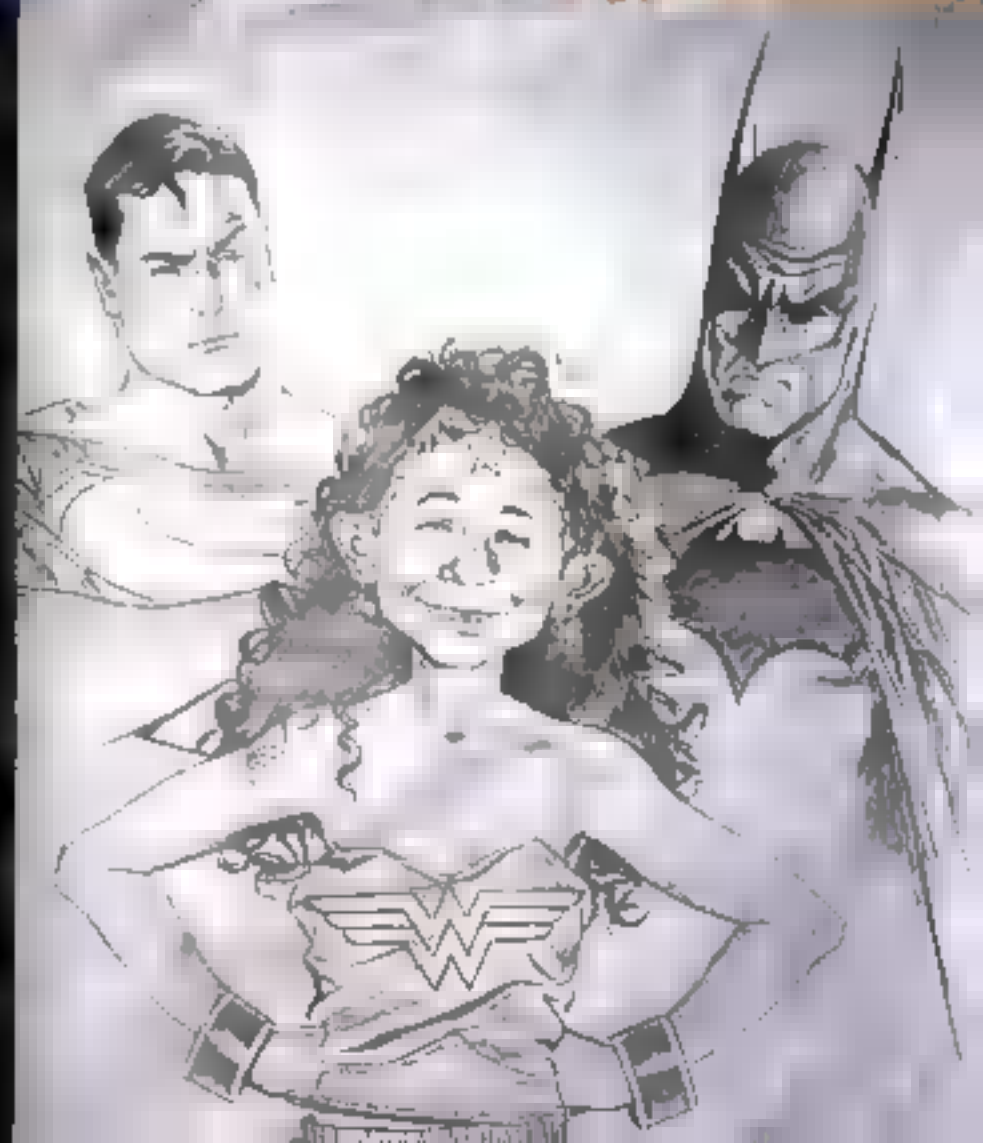
MAD MAGAZINE

MAD



As the childhood drawing to the left indicates, Ross has been a fan of *MAD* Magazine for quite some time. In 2002 he finally got the opportunity to do a *MAD* cover, for the book *MAD About Super Heroes* (above). "It's something I've always wanted to do. Obviously, Alfred E. Newman had to be involved, and he had to appear in contrast to a majestic Superman and Batman." Recalls DC Comics editor Charles Kochman. "*MAD* editors Nick Meglin and John Ficarra approached Alex several times to do a cover, but the right idea and his schedule never really came together. When we were working on this collection, the perfect opportunity finally presented itself."

RIGHT: Unpublished cover concept for *MAD About Super Heroes* (MAD Books, 2002).





JUSTICE LEAGUE: THE ANIMATED SERIES.

Justice League debuted in 2001 on the Cartoon Network. Ross collaborated with Bruce Timm, the show's producer and character designer, for the cover (opposite) of the first issue of a tie-in comic book, *Justice League Adventures* (June 2001). "I love the design of the show, and I wanted to create a very dramatic lighting situation for the cover—I did a marker comp

to figure it out (above, right). I'd always wanted to see what it would be like to paint over Bruce Timm's pencils."

The piece below, eventually used as an ad for the show to appear on the side of a bus, was first laid out by artist David Williams, and then refined by Ross. It was then further changed by Darwin Cooke for the final illustration.





B.T.

HANNA-BARBERA.



Alex has taken opportunities wherever he could to work on the DC characters he grew up with, including those that belong to the *Super Friends* mythology. Featured here in this Giclée print for the Warner Bros. Studio Stores in 2001 are the many heroes of the various Hanna-Barbera cartoon shows (from top left to right): Blip, Jan, Jace, Space Ghost (*Space Ghost*), Blue Falcon, Dyno-Mutt (*Blue Falcon & Dyno-Mutt*), Shazam, Kaboobie, Chuck, Nancy (*Shazam*),

Tundra, Gloop, Igoo, Gloop, Zak, Tara, King Zandor, Dorno (*Herculoids*), Sanson, Goliath (*Sanson & Goliath*), Jayna, Gleek, Apache Chief, Black Vulcan, Zan, Samurai, Marvin, Wendy, Weender Dog (*Super Friends*), Mightas (*Mightas*), Avenger, Birdman (*Birdman*), Vapor Man, Meteor Man, Gravity Girl (*Galaxy Trio*), Raseem, Bez, Faruk, Prince Turhan, Princess Nida, Zuzanna (*Arabian Knights*), and Jara (*Jara of the Jungle*).

THE LEGION OF SUPERHEROES

Led by Superboy, the Legion was formed in the pages of *Adventure Comics* (below, left). Or, more accurately, they *will* be formed in the 30th century, since they exist in the future. (It's all very complicated.) "This is one of my single favorite paintings. Call it fanboy love. My particular obsession with Shadow Lam influenced other character designs from my childhood. This wasn't a commissioned piece initially; I just did it because I loved the characters and I was thrilled when the Warner Bros. Studio Stores made it into a Giclée print. How can you not love the Legion? They're young, they're idyllic, they gleam with innocent sexuality. Lots of intertwining. It's the superhero comic as college fashion show."



BELOW: Alan's art for the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* (1999) recreates the original cover (above) for *Adventure Comics* #247 (April 1958). Art by Curt Swan and Stan Kaye.





Too young to join the Justice League, the sidekicks of (from top, clockwise) Batman, Wonder Woman, the Flash, Aquaman, and Green Arrow formed their own team in *The Brave and the Bold* #54 (July 1964). Ross painted them in 1999 for this Warner Bros. Studio Stores collector's plate. "This is evocative of Neal Adams's and Nick Cardy's run on the *Teen Titans* comic book. Robin, Wonder Girl, Kid Flash, Aqualad, and Speedy represent the next generation of super heroes, and this image depicts them in their purest state. The pain of having to grow up isn't there yet, and why should it be?"

THE TEEN TITANS.





PORTRAITS OF VILLAINY.



1999

An unpublished proposal from 1999, *Portraits of Villainy* was to have been just that: fully painted iconic head shots of the greatest bad guys (and girls) in the DC Universe. Although it never got past the penciled rough stage, Ross did complete his intended cover featuring the Joker (opposite).



1999



1999



1999

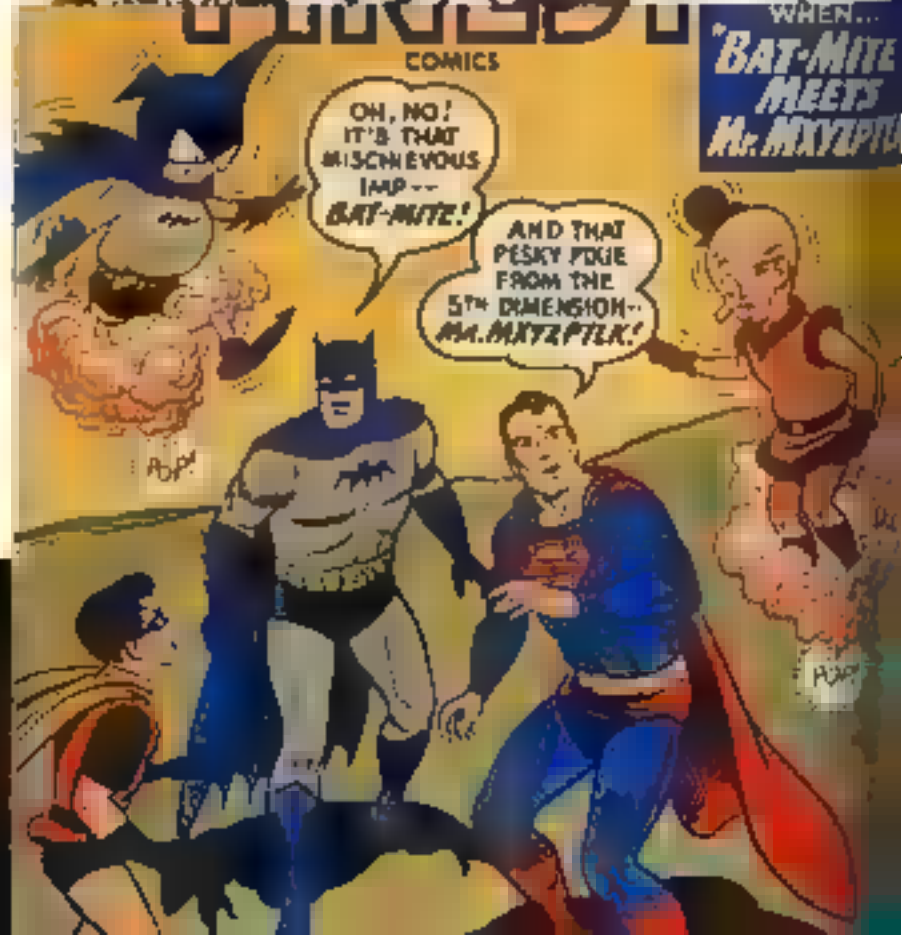


1999





BAT-MITE VS. MR. MXYZPTLK.



Those once-dimensional mischievous imp, Bat-Mite, and Mr. Mxyzptlk, joined forces (more accurately, knocked heads) in *Superman and Batman: World's Finest* (2001)—a 48-page “prestige” format comic book that featured contributions from an astonishing array of artists including David Mazzucchelli, Bruce Timm, and Frank Miller. Ron’s witty installment takes place in the “universe” of *Kingdom Come*, and literally explodes when Mxy becomes outraged that he’s been painted photo-realistically, blasting the pigment off the penciled drawings in all directions (opposite, the image rotated 90° clockwise). “This is, technically, the last *Kingdom Come* image that I did, and this is how Bat-Mite and Mr. Mxyzptlk would have looked had they appeared in that original story—they’d look like actual dwarves and widgees.”



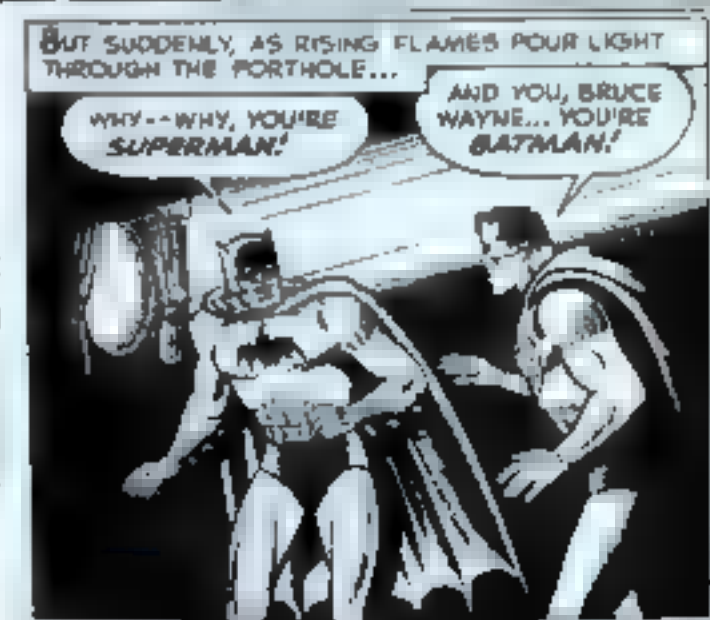
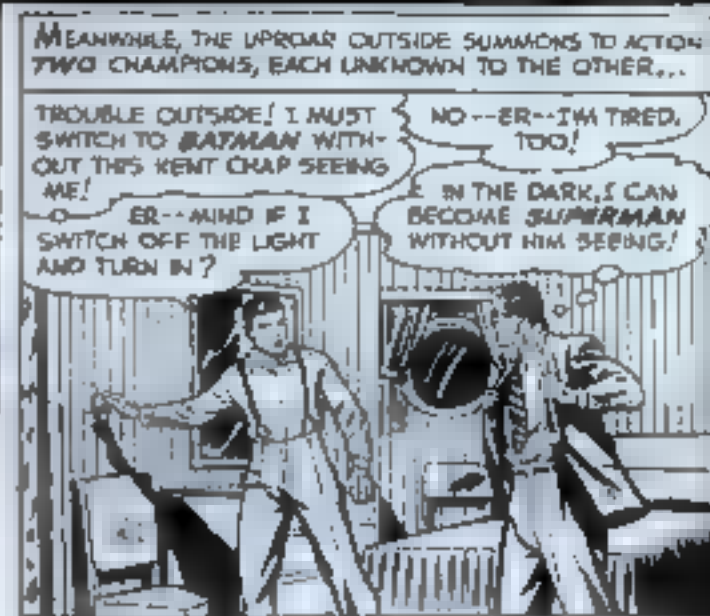


WORLD'S FINEST

RIGHT: Pencil sketch (circa 1998) for "life-size" Superman and Batman cardboard displays (the latter unproduced)



Superman and Batman actually teamed-up for adventures on the radio in the 1940s before they ever did in the comics. It wasn't until 1952, when they accidentally discovered each other's secret identities (see below) that they began appearing regularly together in print in *World's Finest* comics. Now envisioned them for a Warner Bros. Studio Stores Giclee print (opposite) in 1998, the image here rotated 90° counterclockwise. His preparatory pencil sketches are seen on this page.



ABOVE: Batman and Superman discover each other's secret identities in *Superman* #76 (May-June 1952). Art by Carl Swan and John Fischetti. Script by Edmond Hamilton







ABOVE: Cover art for *Justice League* #130. TE: Details from art for *Justice League* #130.
Left to right: Superman, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern, Batman, and the Flash. Art by John Byrne, Stan Lee, Prometheus, Tom Strong, V. (2001) DC Comics.



This lively tribute to writer Alan Moore (*Watchmen*) was created to illustrate *Hizant* magazine articles on his work. It gave Ross the opportunity to honor many characters for their influence — “A real approach to the material has been the most influential in my career. He’s so unpretentious as a writer, because he does the most likely things that would happen if the characters existed as real human beings, and that’s what I try to do visually. And Alan Moore is the only writer you completely remember whatever he’s writing about — he’s got the most convenient characters — even though he’s obscure, like Swamp Thing. His take on *Miracleman* was a huge influence on *King of the Hill* because of the way the character became a demigod. Moore considered all the consequences of that would be interesting.”

ALAN MOORE.



UNDERLIGHTING

UNDERLIGHTING FOR ALL FACES

UNDERLIGHTING



10-18-85
OF
1985
1985

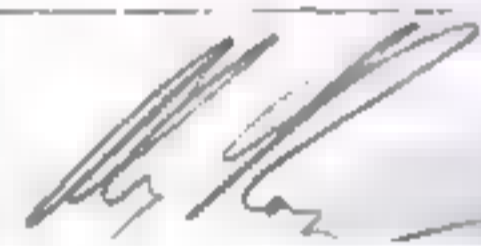
WHITE GLOW SPREADS? spine

Make it look like a flap

Flap



BACKLIGHTING COMBINED WITH UNDERLIGHTING FOR TWO SUPERMEN



CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS.

In 1998 Ross initiated one of his most exciting (and strenuous) projects: to paint a panoramic tableau over George Pérez's pencils for the cover of the hardcover publication of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, the cataclysmic 1985 mini-series that forever changed the DC Universe. The result makes the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel look minimalist. "It was a total dream project for me—over five-hundred characters, it took over a month to do, working every day—by far the one piece I've ever spent the most time on. Every single character required a frisket mask in order to airbrush the background, a hugely laborious undertaking." But definitely a labor of love. "I was fifteen when the original was published, and it was the culmination of everything I enjoyed about DC Comics—they [writer Marv Wolfman and artist Pérez] were giving DC's history the most dramatic send-off ever. The story is the very heart of an insider's longing for knowledge about all of them. George and Marv tried to include everybody, and it completely thrilled me."



STUDY FOR CRISIS PAINING

RIGHT: Superman mourns the death of Supergirl, on the cover of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #7 (October 1985). Art by George Pérez.









WHOSE WILL BE DONE?

The seeds of *Kingdom Come* were planted long before the staff at DC Comics (or anyone else in the comic industry) had ever heard of Alex Ross.

In his early teens, Alex began conceiving of an epic, apocalyptic super hero story (with religious overtones) that would re-examine the whole idea of what the DC characters mean and how their roles in their world would change. He made copious notes and sketches, developing his ideas, resulting in a sort of amalgam of *Action Comics* and *Revelations* (see overleaf).

It would be more than ten years from conception to realization. Working with writer Mark Waid, *Kingdom Come* appeared in 1996, and it changed everything—for the publisher, the industry, and its prolific young artist.

Chronologically, this material should appear earlier in this book—it's Ross's first major work for DC. It's placed here, after the key DC players have been introduced, in order to more fully appreciate the creative process regarding their evolution.

A resin-cast bust of Norman McKay, the crazy man genius of *Kingdom Come*, based on a drawing of Ross's father, Clark, and sculpted by Jerrad Shiflett and Ross (1996). OPPOSITE: Pencil sketch for the front of a *Kingdom Come* T-shirt (1996). BELOW: Art for the cover of *Kingdom Come* #1 (1996).



The concept follows an oft told tale: an older generation of warriors is forced out of retirement to face down the new guard, who are completely out of control. The result is a superhuman civil war, with the stakes no less than the fate of mankind and the future of the world. "Several specific scenarios fascinated me since my teens," says Ross. "One was Superman pulling down the columns of the White House, the way Samson pulled down the pillars of the

Temple of Dagon. Another was Superman surviving a U.S. government sanctioned nuclear blast, and then taking his vengeance for it. I've had a Jesus obsession since childhood, and I wanted to explore putting Superman in the same role. I was haunted by the idea of him punishing America for introducing the nuclear age, but then eventually calming down about it, embracing peace, and getting beyond the need to wage war."



But of course, waging war is a large part of what super heroes are all about. The famous line about Superman's "Never-Ending Battle" comes to mind. "I don't want to be told there's an end to any of these myths. And yet I wanted to be the one to define the end of DC's Arthurian saga, even though it would never be an 'official' ending."

Ross was paired by editors Dan Raspler and Pete Tomasi with

veteran comics writer Mark Waid to produce four individual monthly installments of the series, which totalled 180 pages when finished and was heralded as a DC Comics milestone. Certainly tales based on the "future" of the DC characters had been done before (and were in fact a story-telling staple since the 1950s), but the meticulous execution of *Kingdom Come* made it seem like this story was real, like it was actually happening.



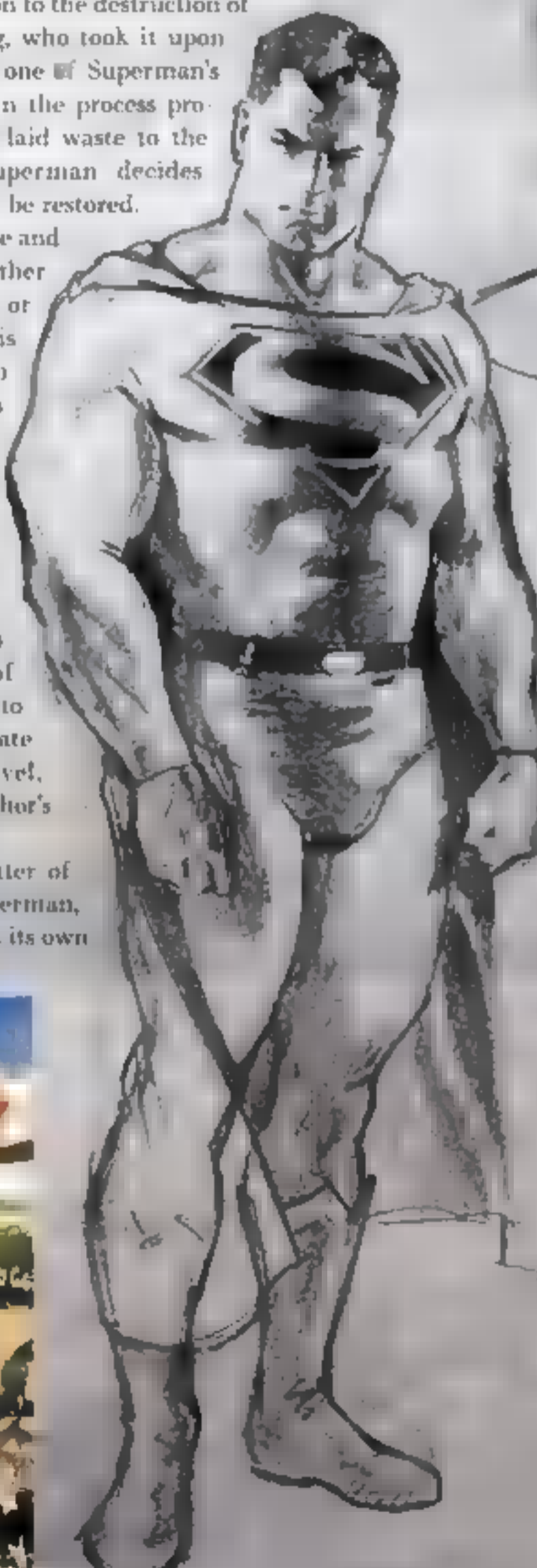
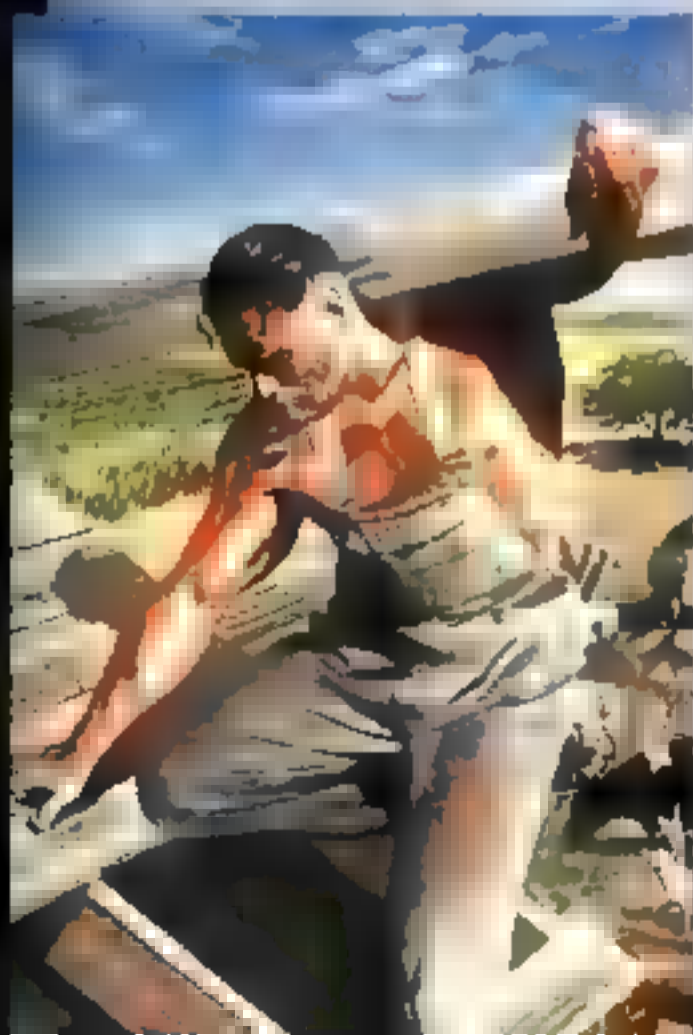
At the outset of *Kingdom Come*, we find that Superman has retired and secluded himself from the world for ten years. It's eventually revealed that this is a result of the murder of Lois Lane by the Joker, and the subsequent killing of the Joker by a new upstart meta-human named Magog. Magog represents the "judge and jury" generation of super heroes that has replaced the Justice League.

Superman is eventually coaxed out of retirement by Wonder Woman. She directs his attention to the destruction of Kansas at the hands of Magog, who took it upon himself to hunt and eliminate one of Superman's oldest foes, the Parasite, and in the process produced a nuclear reaction that laid waste to the breadbasket of America. Superman decides enough is enough—order must be restored.

He resurrects the Justice League and warns the new generation to either clean up its act and join him or suffer the consequences. This sets the stage for the battle to end all battles, as superbeings choose sides, and an understandably shell-shocked United Nations makes plans of its own to destroy them all.

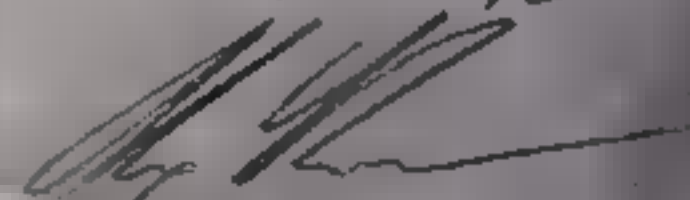
Meanwhile, Lex Luthor, Superman's greatest and oldest foe, assembles the Human Liberation Front—a team of thinly disguised supervillains to whom he reveals the ultimate secret weapon: Captain Marvel, who is mysteriously under Luthor's control.

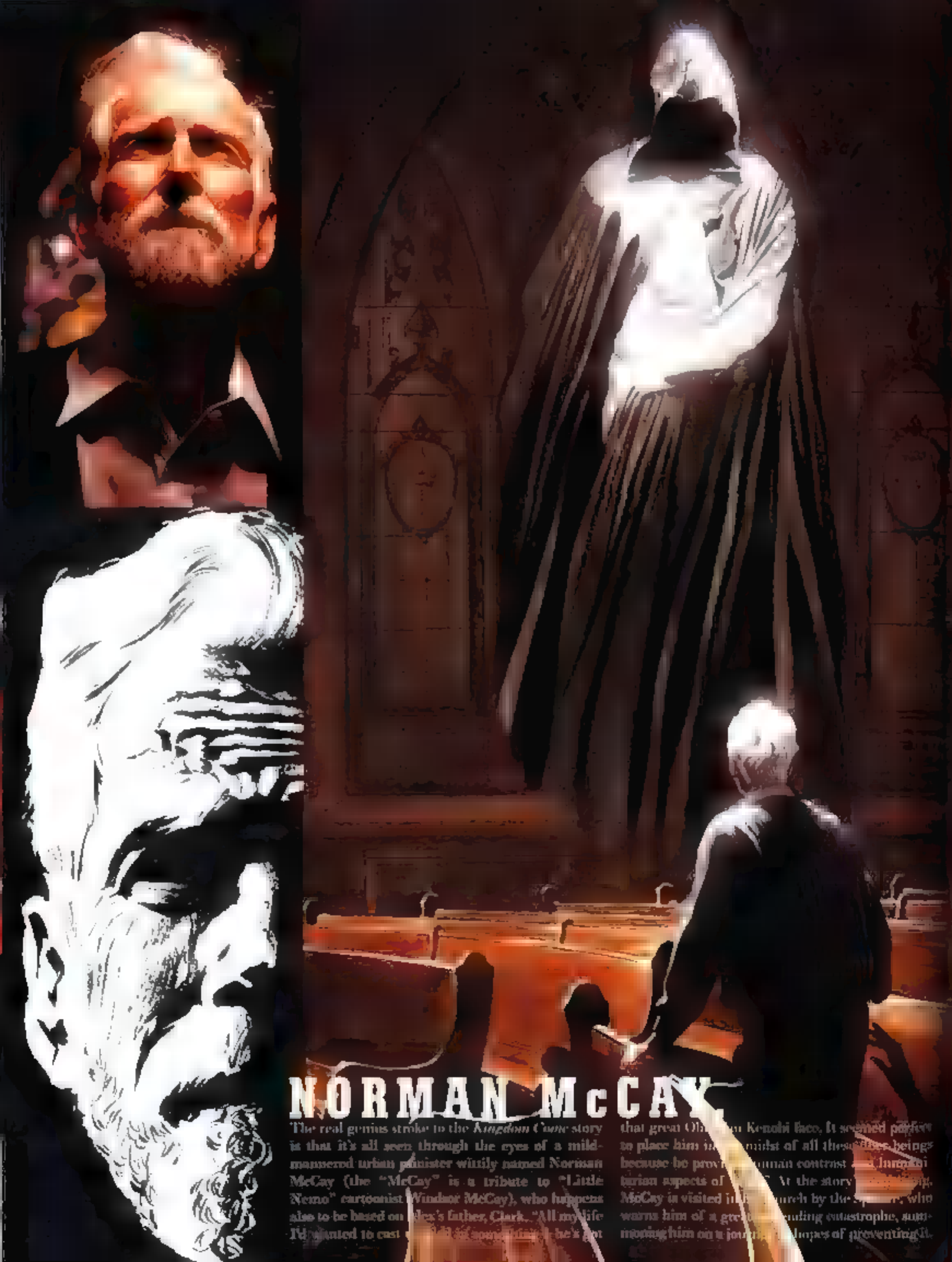
And then there's the matter of Batman, who doesn't miss Superman, and recruits his own army, with its own agenda....



LEFT: Superman as we first see him in *Kingdom Come* #1 (1996), apparently working on a farm, which is actually a holographic projection in his arctic Fortress of Solitude. This pose is both a nod to the cover of *Superman* #1 (Summer 1939) and an allusion to Christ carrying the cross. "I wanted to take things to the next level—if Superman had long hair at one time, then initially in *Kingdom Come* he'd have a ponytail and it would be... I tried to apply this kind of thinking to all of the characters—how they would breed, and what would result." OPPOSITE: Art for the back of a *Kingdom Come* T-shirt (1996).

EARLIEST CONCEPT
DRAWING FOR KINGDOM
COME
WINTER '92

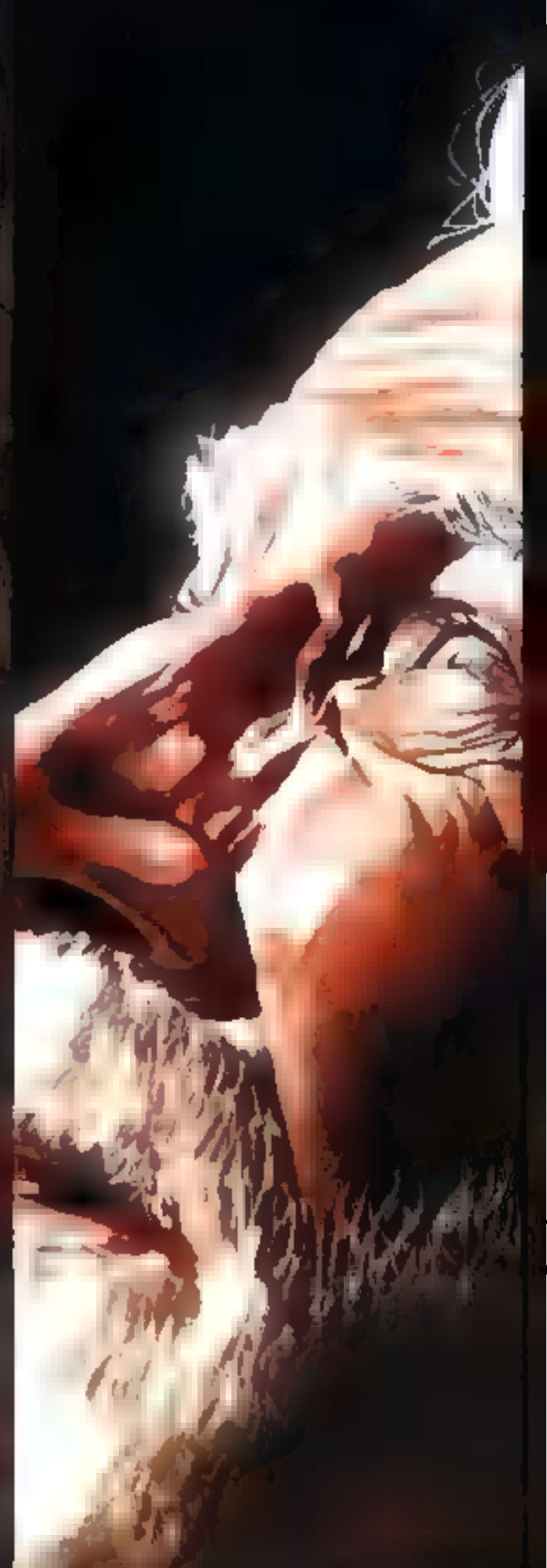




NORMAN McCAY

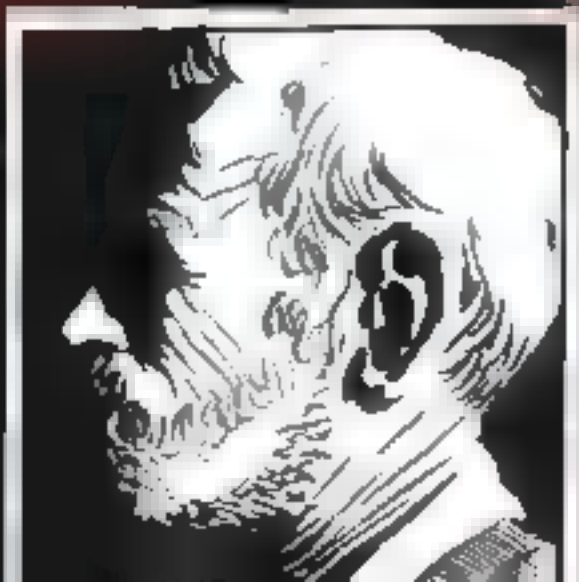
The real genius stroke to the *Kingdom Come* story is that it's all seen through the eyes of a mild-mannered urban pianist wittily named Norman McCay (the "McCay" is a tribute to "Little Nemo" cartoonist Winsor McCay), who happens also to be based on Alex's father, Clark. "All my life I'd wanted to cast a shadow of some kind, but he's got

that great Olaf from *Kenobi* face. It seemed perfect to place him in the midst of all these other beings because he provides a human contrast to the Inuitian aspects of the story. At the story's beginning, McCay is visited in his church by the square, who warns him of a great impending catastrophe, summoning him on a journey in hopes of preventing it.

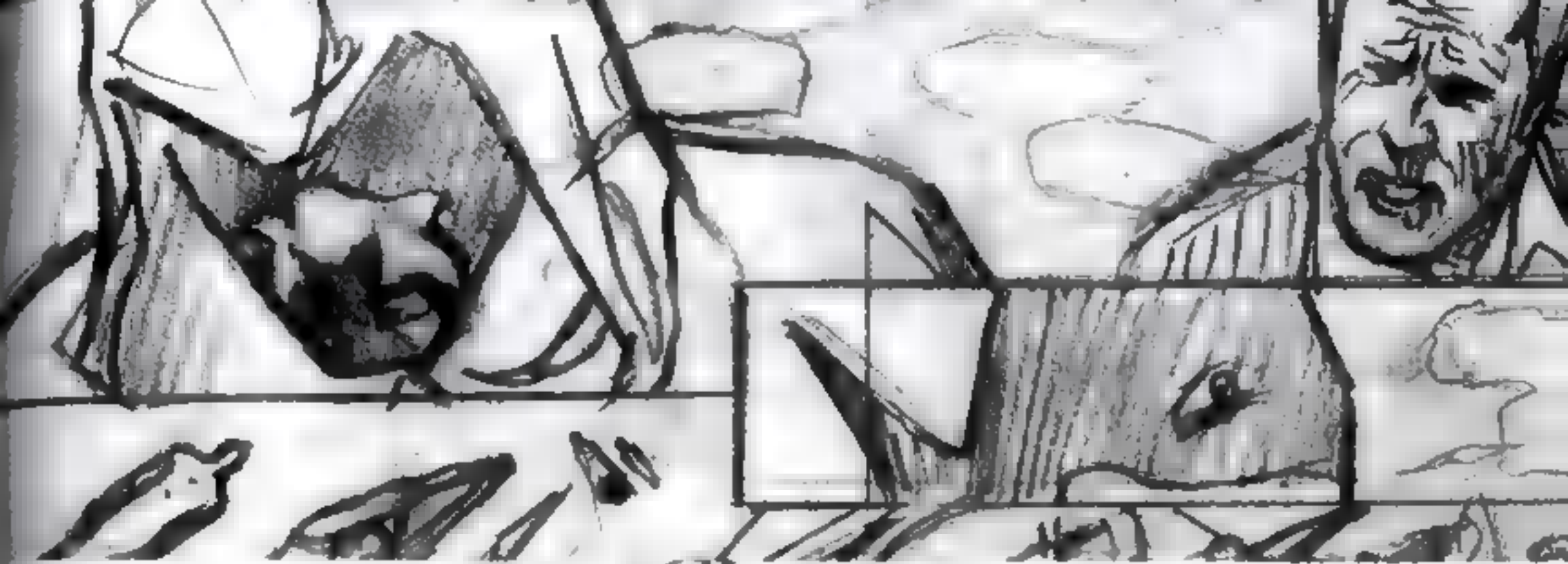


McCoy becomes Dante to the Spectre's Hell, and the two pass through and understand through the dynamic labyrinth of the story and its many components. In the end it is McCoy who makes himself known as Superman, providing the story's moral center. "The idea was that [McCoy] could bridge the ethical challenges between the responsibilities of the man and their responsibilities. He could be the one to react, as opposed to Semoge and the Ghosts of the Past." And what did Clark think of being made into a comic icon? "He didn't understand what I wanted to do at first, but he trusted me. He trusted me. Making him a major character in the story not only worked aesthetically, it gave me a reason to spend more time with him. It was fine, but it was a moral dimension. I was proud of that, and I want to be part of it."

OPPOSITE, UPPER LEFT: Clark Norman Ross, in one of Alex's many reference drawings of his father as Norman Ross. OPPOSITE, LOWER LEFT: Ink drawing of McCoy for the novelization of *Kingdom Come* (DC Books, 1998). OPPOSITE, RIGHT: The Spectre who makes himself known to McCoy, also from the novelization of *Kingdom Come*. ABOVE, RIGHT: The same scene from *Kingdom Come* #1 (1996). RIGHT: Unpublished sketch of McCoy in profile.







LEFT: The "wild cards" of the story—the Joker, Captain Atom, Deadman, Aquaman, and Billy Batson (aka Captain Marvel). Art from *Revelations*, a supplement to the limited edition hardcover of *Kingdom Come* (Graphitti Designs, 1997)

OPPOSITE: The new generation of meta-humans make trouble in *Kingdom Come* #1 (1996). BELOW: Some of the key *Kingdom Come* players, from the title page of the collected edition (1997). From left: Herman McCoy, Captain Marvel, Batman, Nightstar, Red Robin, Wonder Woman, and Superman.





LEFT: The planet Apokolips in full bloom, from a sequence that did not appear in the original publication of *Kingdom Come*, but was added to the collected edition. BELOW: Art for the cover of *Kingdom Come* #2 (1996).

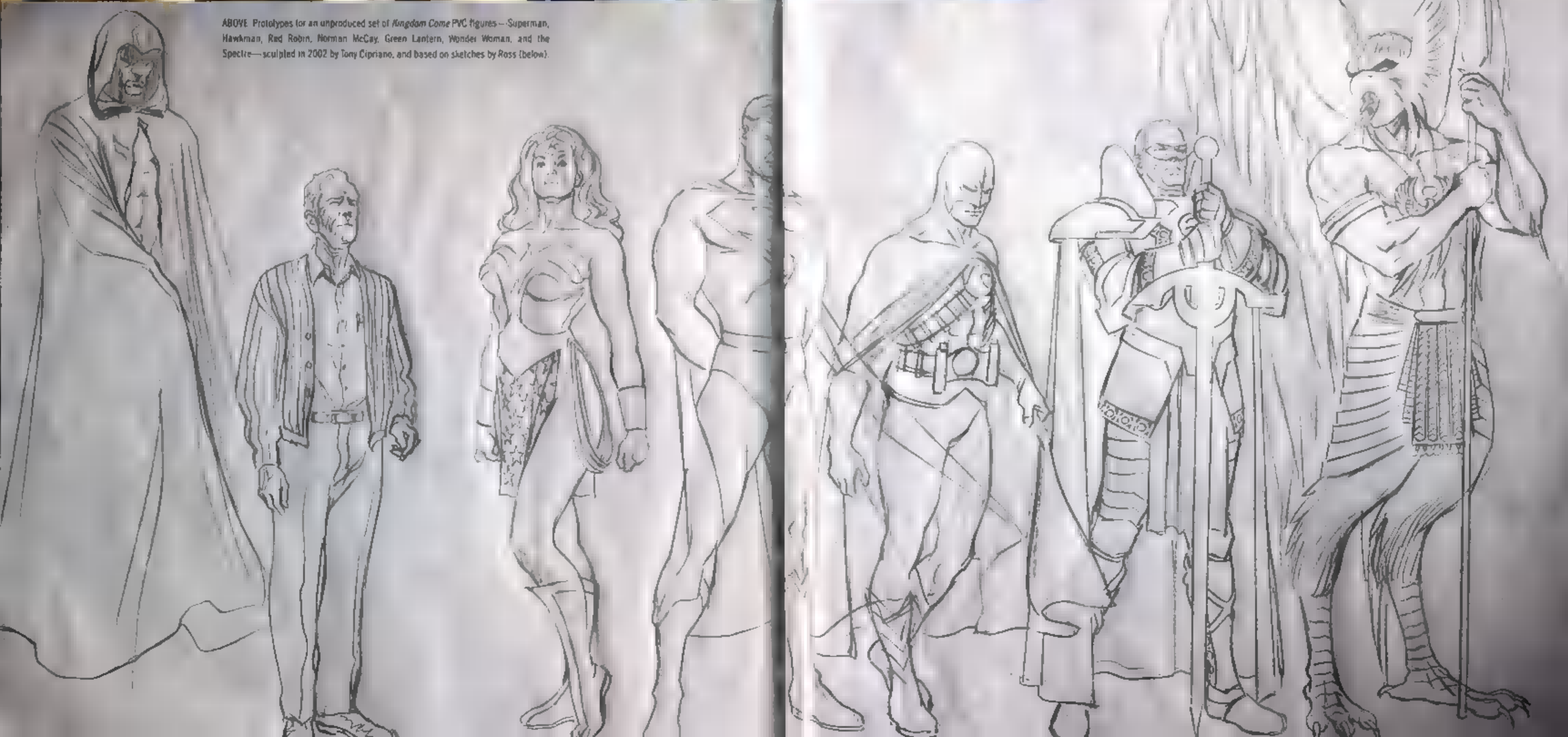


FOR BOB - WITH GREAT APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE



From its conception, one thing was clear to Ross about *Kingdom Come*: a concept usually shied away from in mainstream super hero comics: "I knew that a lot of the characters wouldn't survive it, that the cataclysmic explosion in the finale would wipe most of them out. That was key. Otherwise it wouldn't have the weight that I wanted it to. People die in wars. Even super people."

ABOVE Prototypes for an unproduced set of *Kingdom Come* PVC figures—Superman, Hawkman, Red Robin, Norman McCay, Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, and the Spectre—sculpted in 2002 by Tony Cipriano, and based on sketches by Ross (below).





ABOVE: Superman calls to order a meeting of the reunited Justice League aboard Green Lantern's satellite fortress in *Kingdom Come # 2* (1996).

For most of *Kingdom Come*, Batman is out of costume, his identity long-since compromised and made public. He monitors Gotham City with a network of surveillance cameras, and deploys huge bat robots to patrol the streets. Bruce Wayne wears a metal exoskeleton, less an outfit than a brace—the toll of a lifetime of painful crime-fighting. “The injuries became his persona—his costume days are well behind him. But I couldn’t resist suiting him up for the big finale, as he charges in like the cavalry, and that was both fun and daunting to figure out. I tried many different designs, but ultimately I went back to the flat planes of Bob Kane’s original drawings, and adapted them to a suit of armor.”

LEFT: Ross’s first design of Batman’s armor (circa 1993), which would undergo many iterations (below) before he was happy with it. OVERLEAF: Some of Ross’s many preliminary character sketches for the enormous cast of *Kingdom Come* (circa 1993).

OPPOSITE, TOP AND BOTTOM: The former Teen Titans. Art from *Revelations*, a supplement to the limited edition hardcover of *Kingdom Come* (Graphix Designs, 1997). BELOW: Ideas for the design of Batman’s *Kingdom Come* armor (circa 1993).

THE FIRST CONCEPT DRAWING FOR THE KINGDOM COME BATMAN.



LEFT: Superman makes his big comeback, from the end of the first issue of *Kingdom Come* (1996).





"I've always felt Alex gives Superman a very paternal look. He's like the wise, caring father we seek out when life throws us a curve. Rather than simply solving the problem for us, Alex's Superman, like any good parent, encourages us to find the answers for ourselves." —Paul Dini

KINGDOM COME

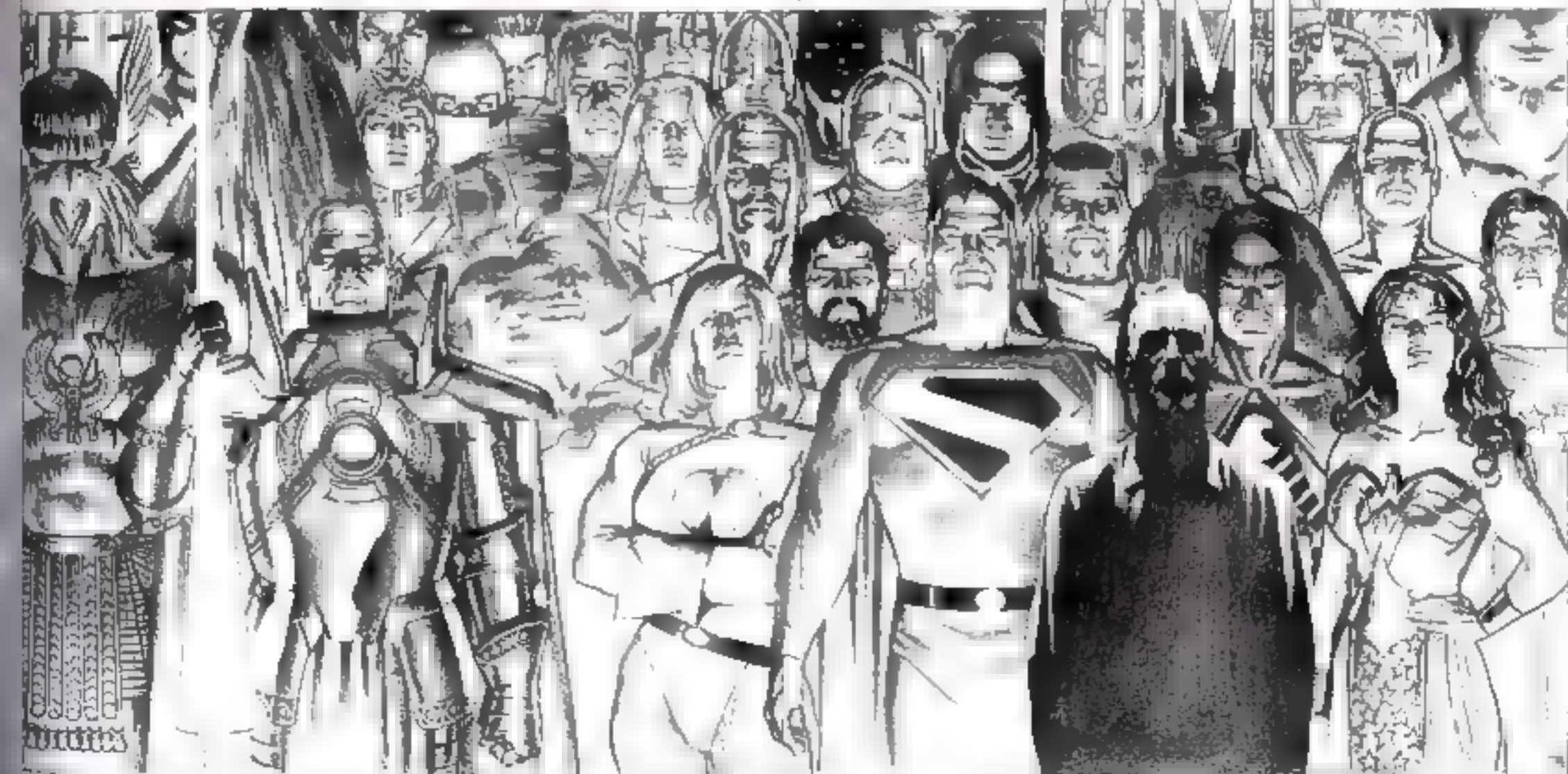
OPPOSITE, LEFT Art from *Revelations* a supplement to the limited edition hardcover of *Kingdom Come* (Graphitti Designs, 1997). OPPOSITE, CENTER Trade advertisements for *Kingdom Come* (1996). OPPOSITE, UPPER RIGHT The reunited Justice League, led by Superman, also from *Revelations*.

KINGDOM COME



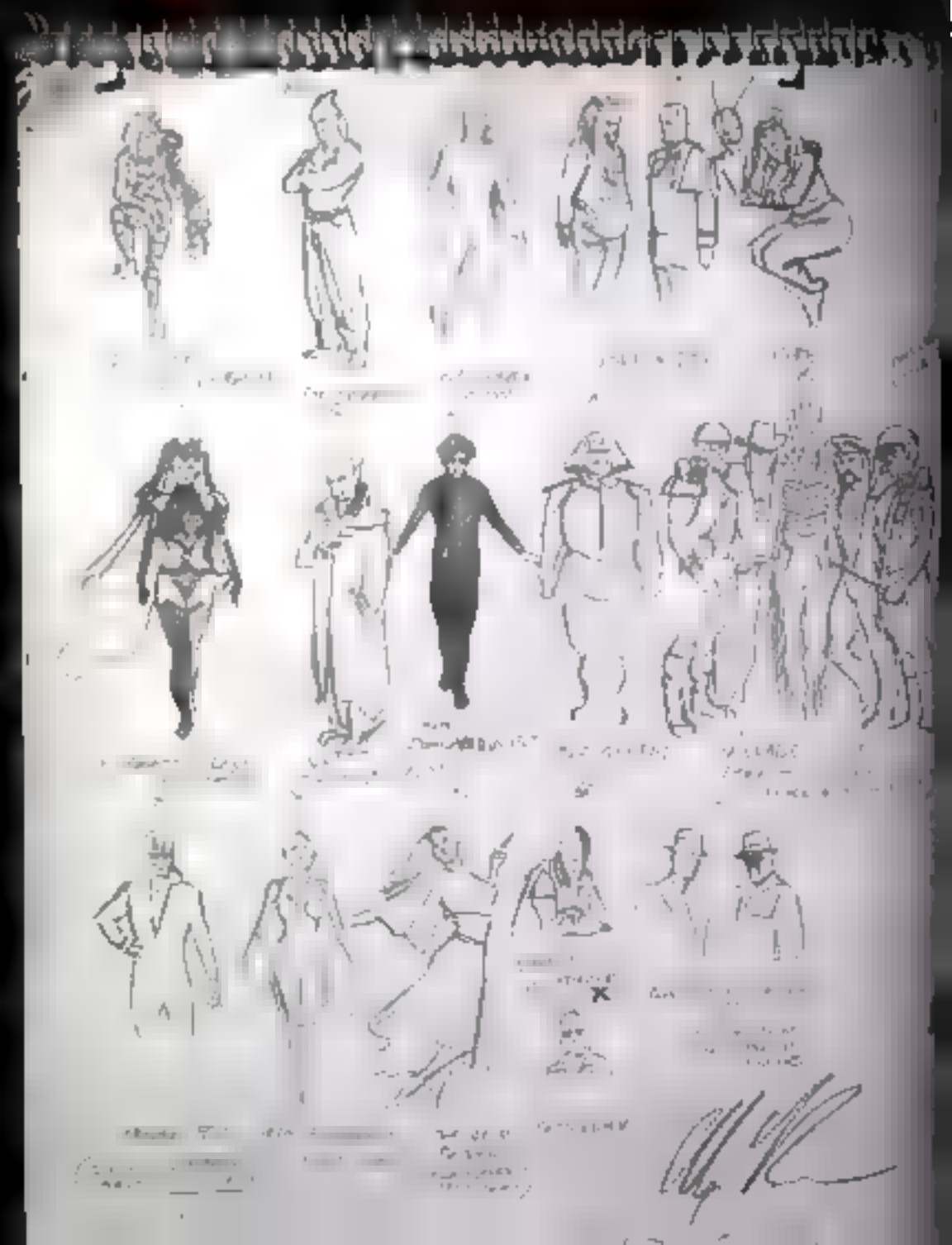
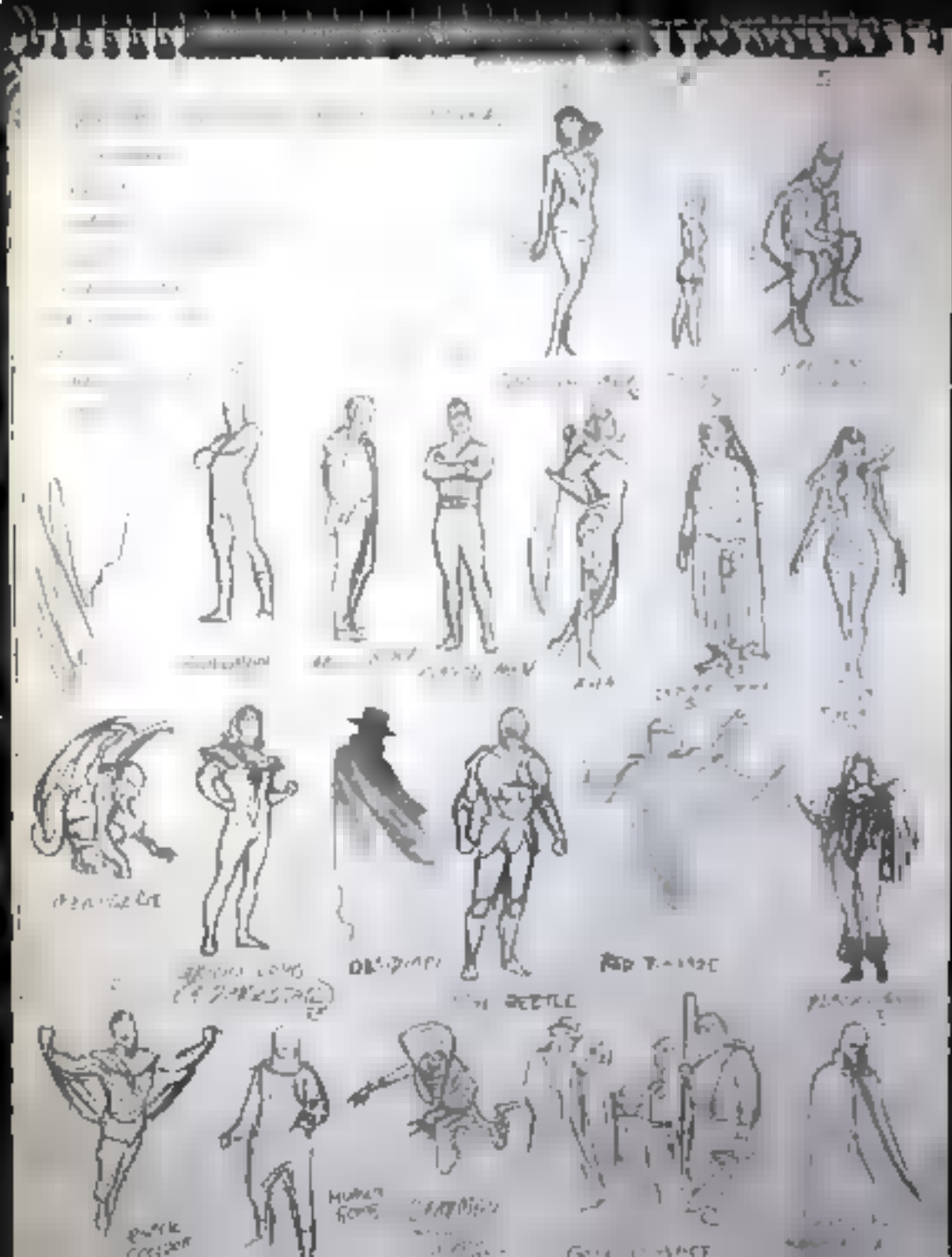
ABOVE: Pencil sketch for the final art for the cover of *Kingdom Come* #1 (1996) featuring the Spectre and the new generation of renegade meta-humans. OPPOSITE, LOWER RIGHT: The super-army led by Batman from *Revelations*. BELOW: Superman and his allies, penciled for the cover of *Kingdom Come* #2 (1996).

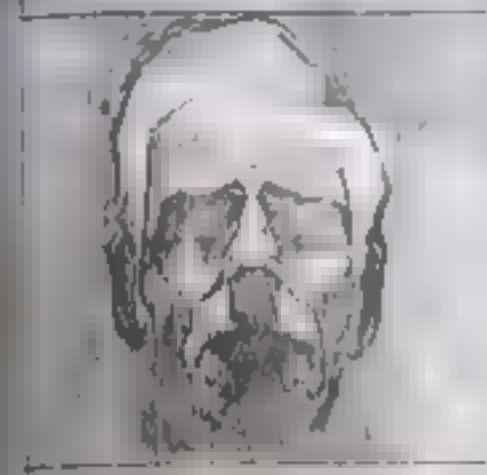
KINGDOM COME





ABOVE: Art for the cover for *Wizard* #57 (May 1996), which was severely cropped for publication. The figure behind Wonder Woman is actually Robin, though the Flash's left "wing" behind his head makes him appear to be Batman. ABOVE, RIGHT: Art for the cover of *Overstreet's Fan* #14 (August 1996).





OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Preliminary character sketches for possible inclusion in *Kingdom Come* (circa 1993). ABOVE, LEFT: Pencil sketch for the first *Kingdom Come* poster/advertisement for *Kingdom Come*. Note that *Shazam* McCay was repositioned for the final art (above, right), placing him at the bottom for emphasis. The *Kingdom Come* cloak and hand loom ominously in the background. "This was to be the DC 'official' look at the series, and it had to have a sense of unity. It was all to show *Kingdom Come* would have to recognize them by their faces and not their costumes—Wonder Woman, *Green Lantern*, *Flash*, *Captain Marvel*, *Superman*, and *Shazam* the guy who was my dad—bringing up the rear."



OPPOSITE: The opening shot of Green Lantern and his satellite fortress from *Kingdom Come* #1 (1996). Pop cultural references abound in the story, often slyly, and this is a prime example: the doughnut-shaped green structure in the foreground is the spaceship that appears on the iconic 1977 record album cover for Electric Light Orchestra's *Out of the Blue*. There are literally hundreds of similar homages throughout the book.

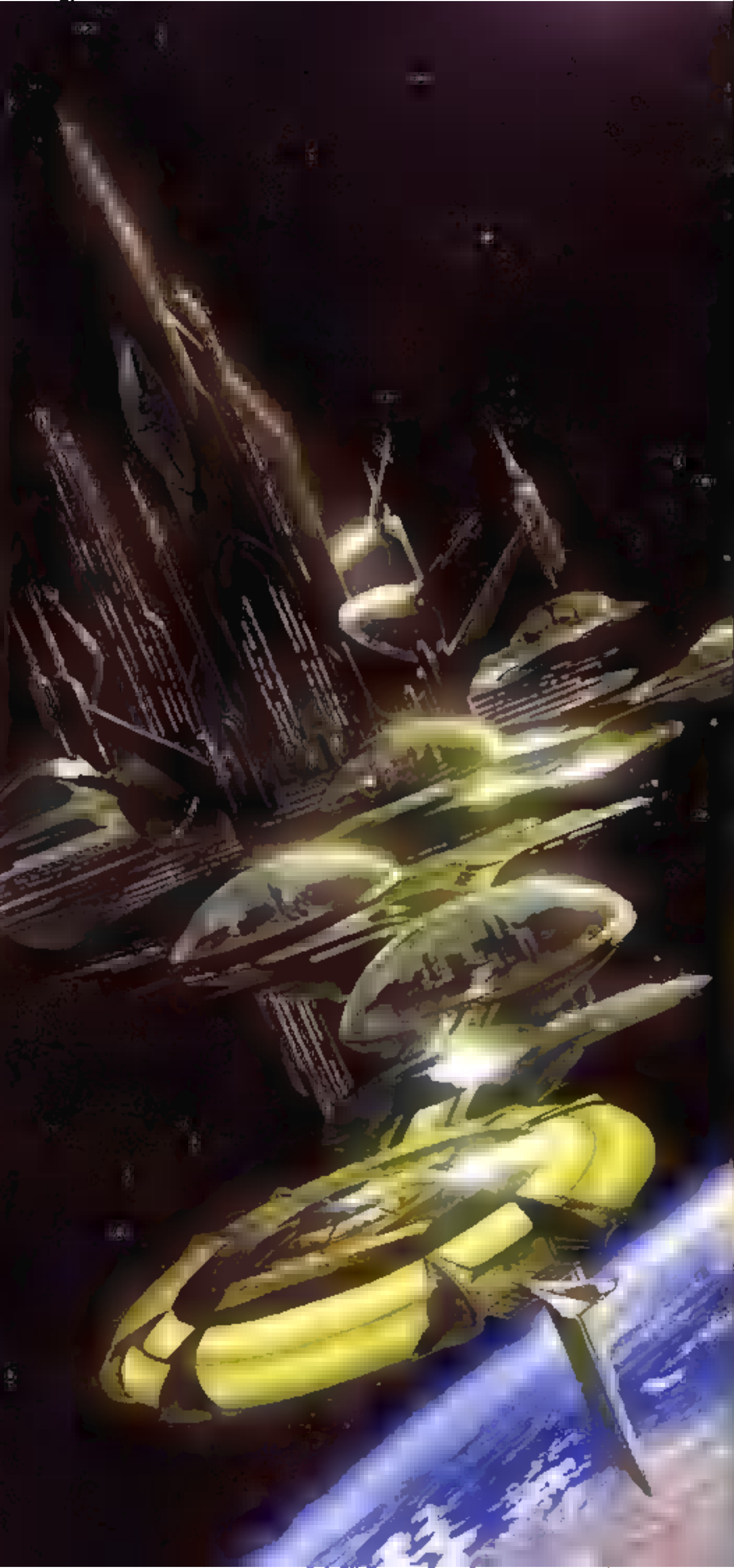
220
EXCEPT FOR
-NET

This page features Ross's first *Kingdom Come* sketches of the Flash and Green Lantern. The Flash (below, left) has taken on the visage of Mercury, which is a nod to his Golden Age costume. Now, however, he is constantly vibrating, blurry even when he's standing still (which is almost never). The first attempt at Green Lantern (below) is an amalgam of his Golden and Silver Age designs. Ross wasn't entirely satisfied with it and adapted the concept to a suit of armor (opposite). "That makes the most sense: his armor has become the ring and the battery combined."

11/10/78
11/10/78
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[Handwritten signature]



THE GREEN KNIGHT





ABOVE: The *Kingdom Come* Green Lantern action figure, sculpted by Tim Bruckner (DC Direct, 2003) LEFT: Art from the *Kingdom Come* novelization (Warner Books, 1998), seen here on its side.



Dick Grayson's role in *Kingdom Come* is that of Red Robin (left), not Nightwing—as he is in current DC continuity. And Batman's former partner is now allied with the Man of Steel. "He's Red Robin in the story instead of Nightwing because he wants to reclaim the Robin mantle from Jason Todd and Tim Drake (Robins II and III, respectively). Recruiting Robin is Superman's attempt to get Batman's attention and support, which of course doesn't work."

One treat for Ross was the introduction of Grayson's progeny, Knightstar (top). "She's a character I created when I was eleven. I was finally able to give her status as a member of the DC Universe in *Kingdom Come*, as the daughter of Nightwing and his ex-Teen Titans member and former wife, Starfire."

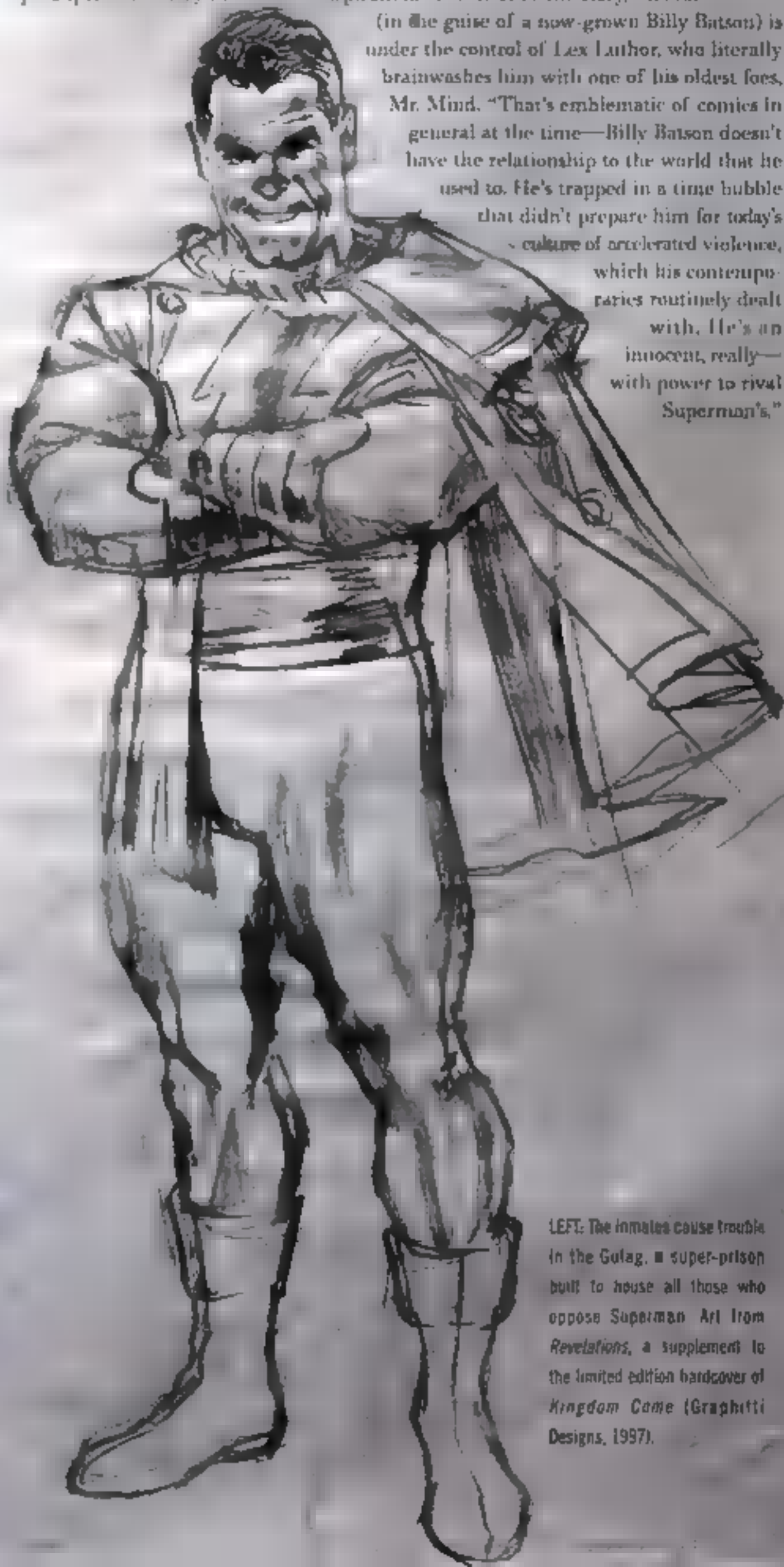


LEFT: The *Kingdom Come* Red Robin action figure, sculpted by Jim Shoop (DC Direct, 2003). ABOVE: Red Robin brings grim news to the Justice League in this panel from *Kingdom Come* #3 (1996).

CAPTAIN MARVEL

In *Kingdom Come*, Captain Marvel's climactic confrontation with Superman is symbolic of the legendary legal battles between Fawcett Publications and DC Comics in the 1940s and 50s. DC claimed that Captain Marvel was an infringement on their copyright to Superman and eventually settled—only to acquire the rights to the character years later. “Now he gets a bit of revenge,” jokes Ross. “I also drew from Wally Wood’s classic 1950s ‘Superduperman!’ story in *MAD* as inspiration.” For most of the story, Marvel

(in the guise of a now-grown Billy Batson) is under the control of Lex Luthor, who literally brainwashes him with one of his oldest foes, Mr. Mind. “That’s emblematic of comics in general at the time—Billy Batson doesn’t have the relationship to the world that he used to. He’s trapped in a time bubble that didn’t prepare him for today’s culture of accelerated violence, which his contemporaries routinely dealt with. He’s an innocent, really—with power to rival Superman’s.”



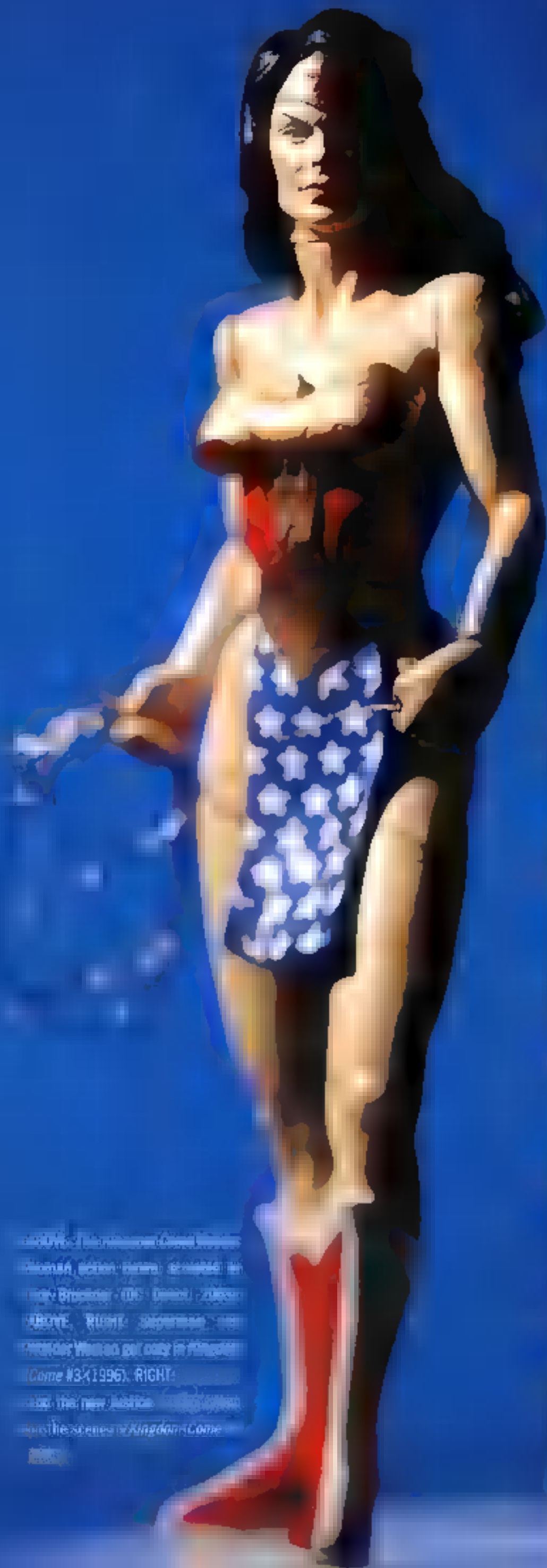
LEFT: The inmates cause trouble in the Gulag, a super-prison built to house all those who oppose Superman. Art from *Revelations*, a supplement to the limited edition hardcover of *Kingdom Come* (Graphitti Designs, 1997).





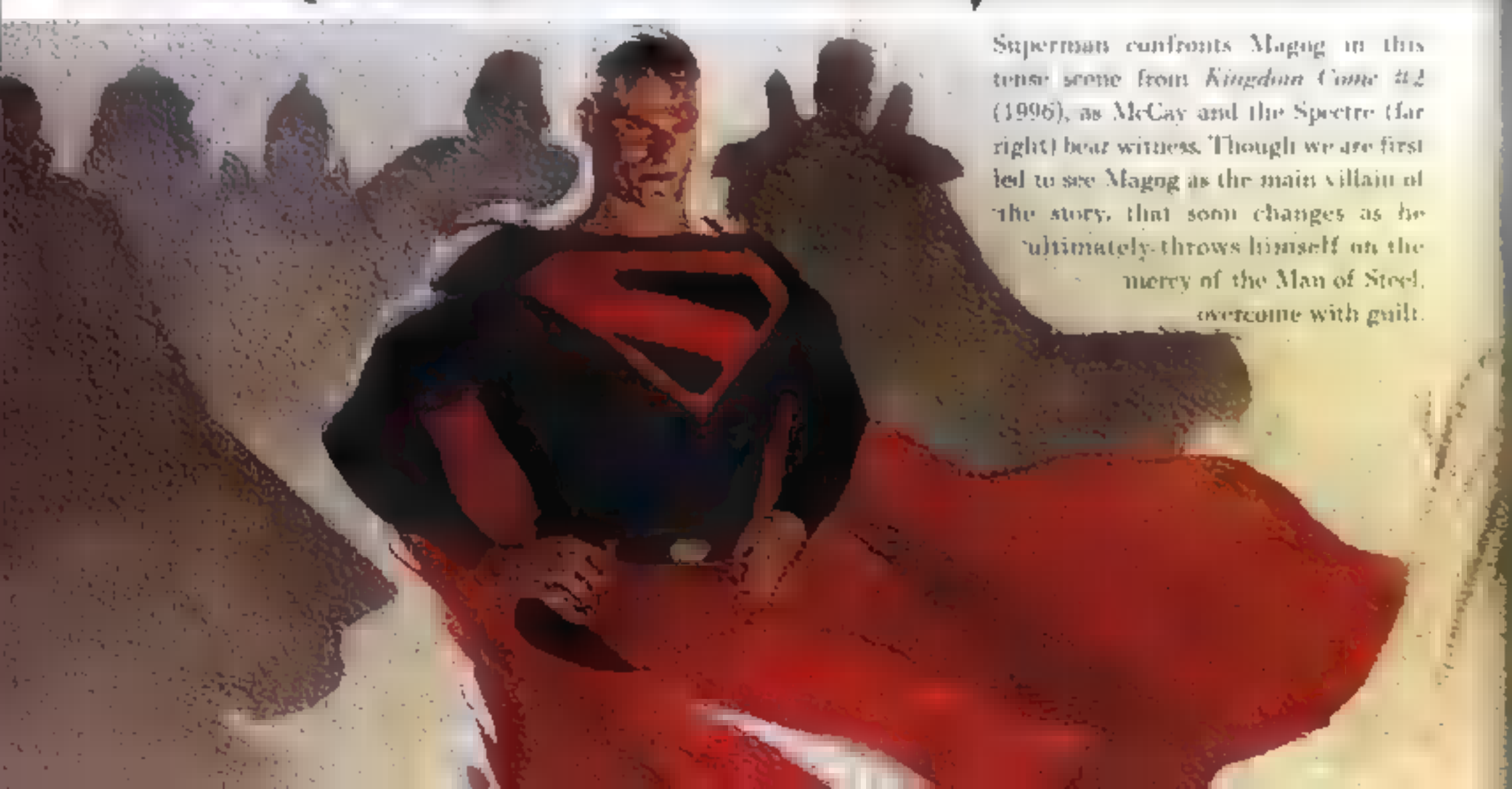
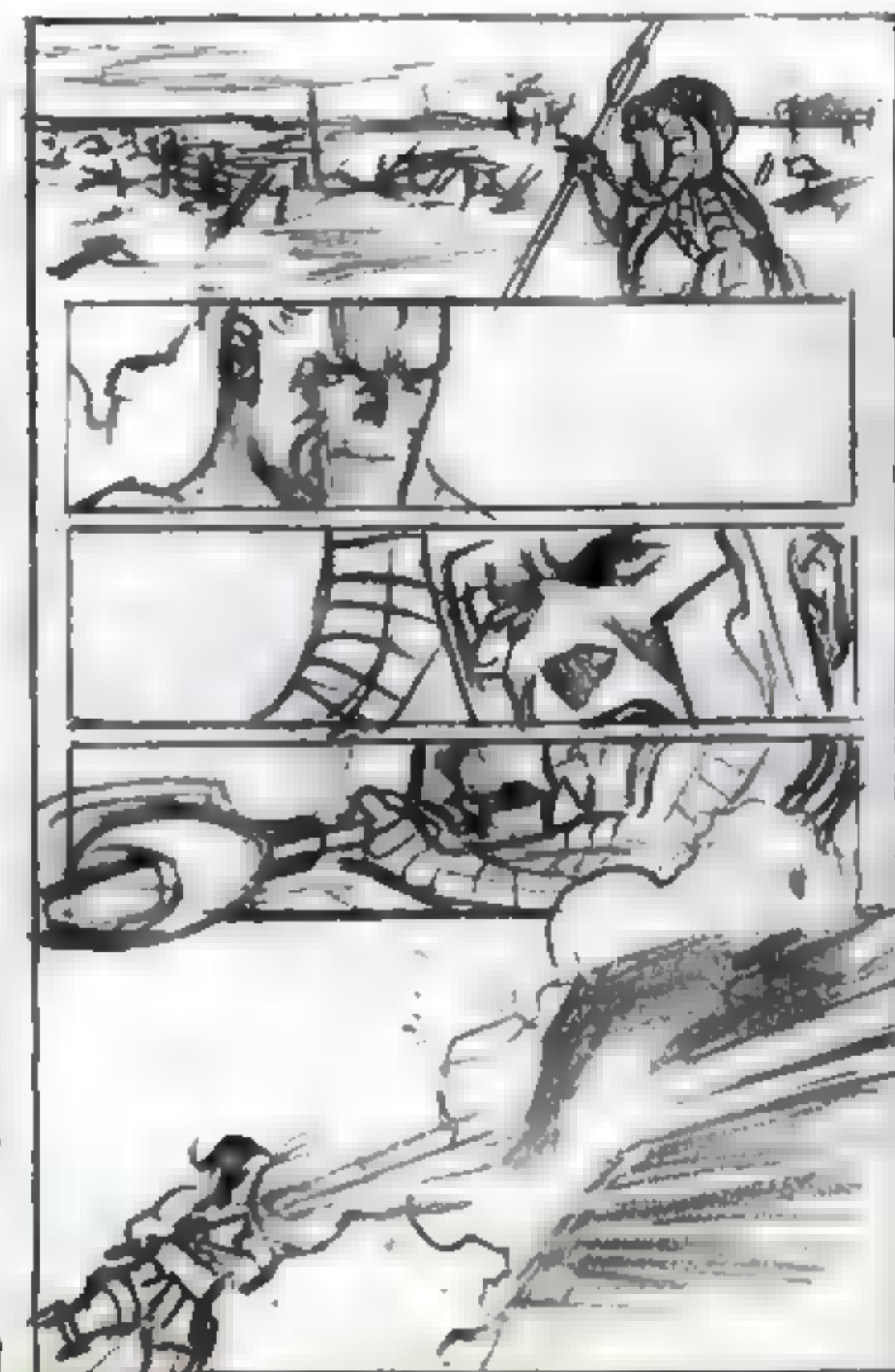
■ ■ ■: The *Kingdom Come* Captain Marvel action figure, sculpted by Tim Bruckner (DC Direct, 2003). OPPOSITE, LEFT: A horrified Norman McCay watches Billy Batson struggle to become his alter ego Captain Marvel, in art from the *Kingdom Come* novelization (Warner Books, 1998). OPPOSITE, RIGHT: The last page ■ ■ ■ sets ■ ■ ■ stage for the mayhem ■ ■ ■ begin in #4. Who is the stronger of the two? "Realistically, Captain Marvel should ■ ■ ■, which is ironic, given that Superman ■ ■ ■ better known. But Captain Marvel is ■ ■ ■ 'World's Mightiest Mortal.'"





WONDER WOMAN: THE NEW 52 (DAVID FINCH);
WONDER WOMAN: THE NEW 52 (DAVID FINCH);
WONDER WOMAN: THE NEW 52 (DAVID FINCH);
WONDER WOMAN: THE NEW 52 (DAVID FINCH);
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WONDER WOMAN: THE NEW 52 (DAVID FINCH);
WONDER WOMAN: THE NEW 52 (DAVID FINCH);

WOLFE



Superman confronts Magog in this tense scene from *Kingdom Come* #2 (1996), as McKay and the Spectre (far right) bear witness. Though we are first led to see Magog as the main villain of the story, that soon changes as he ultimately throws himself on the mercy of the Man of Steel, overcome with guilt.

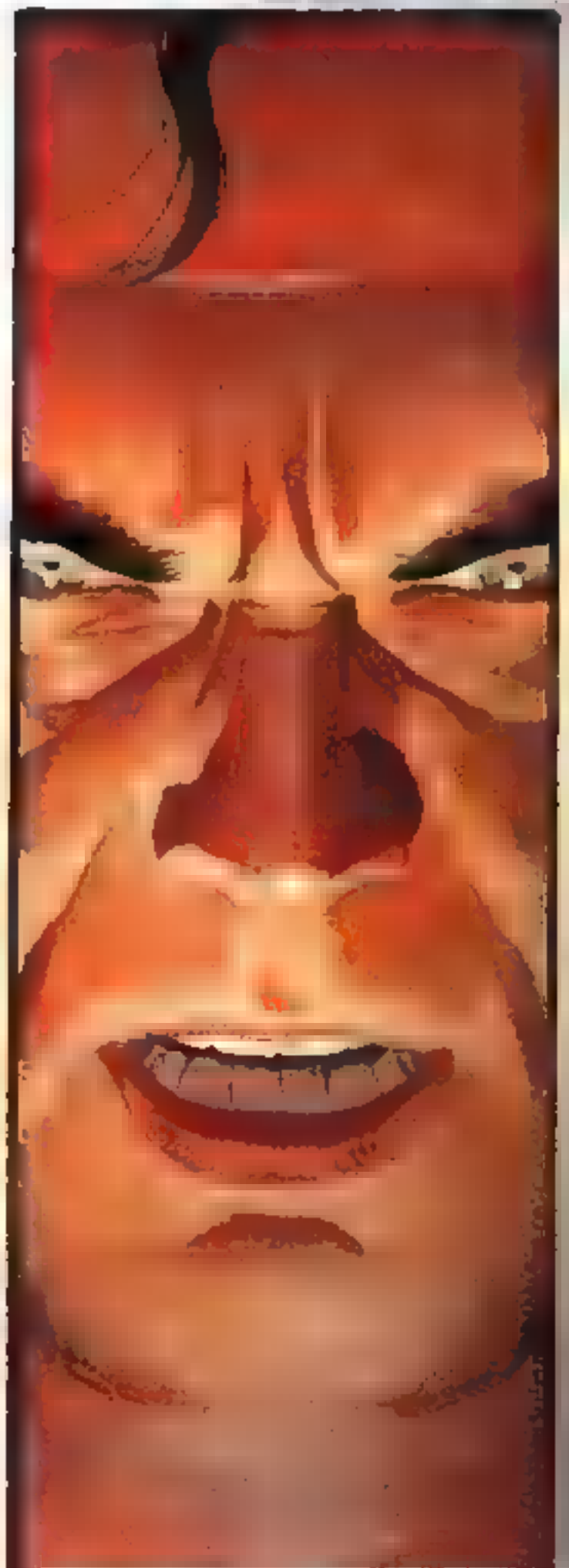
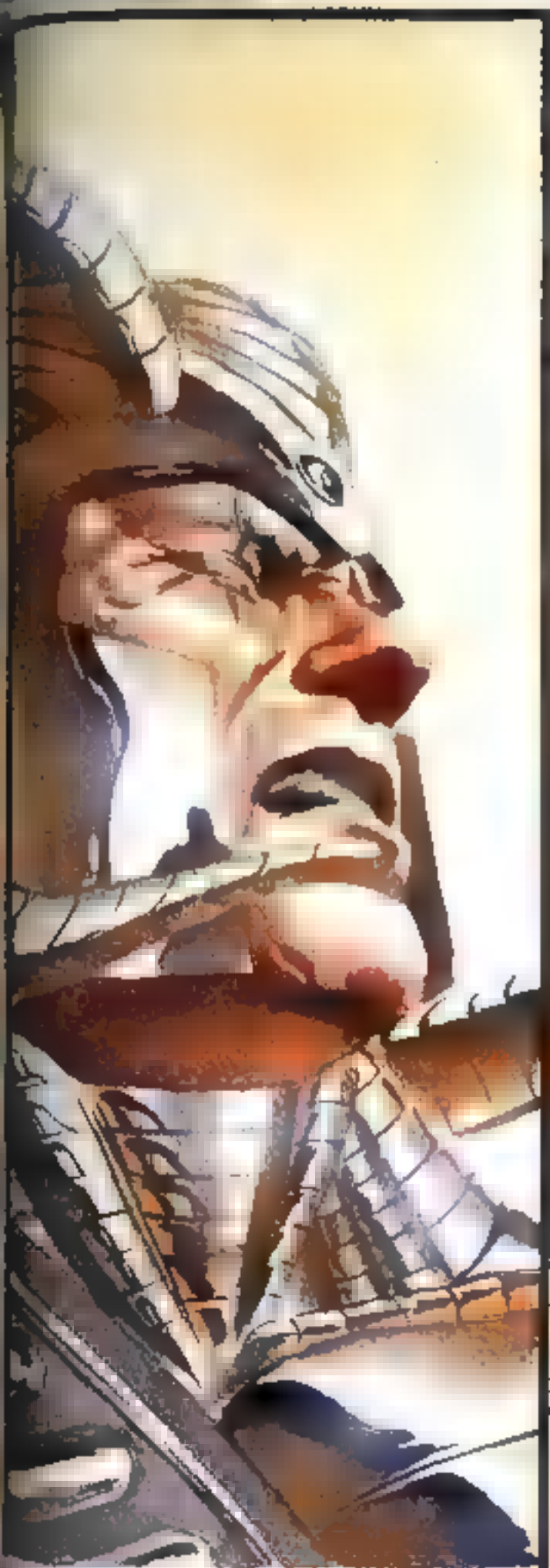




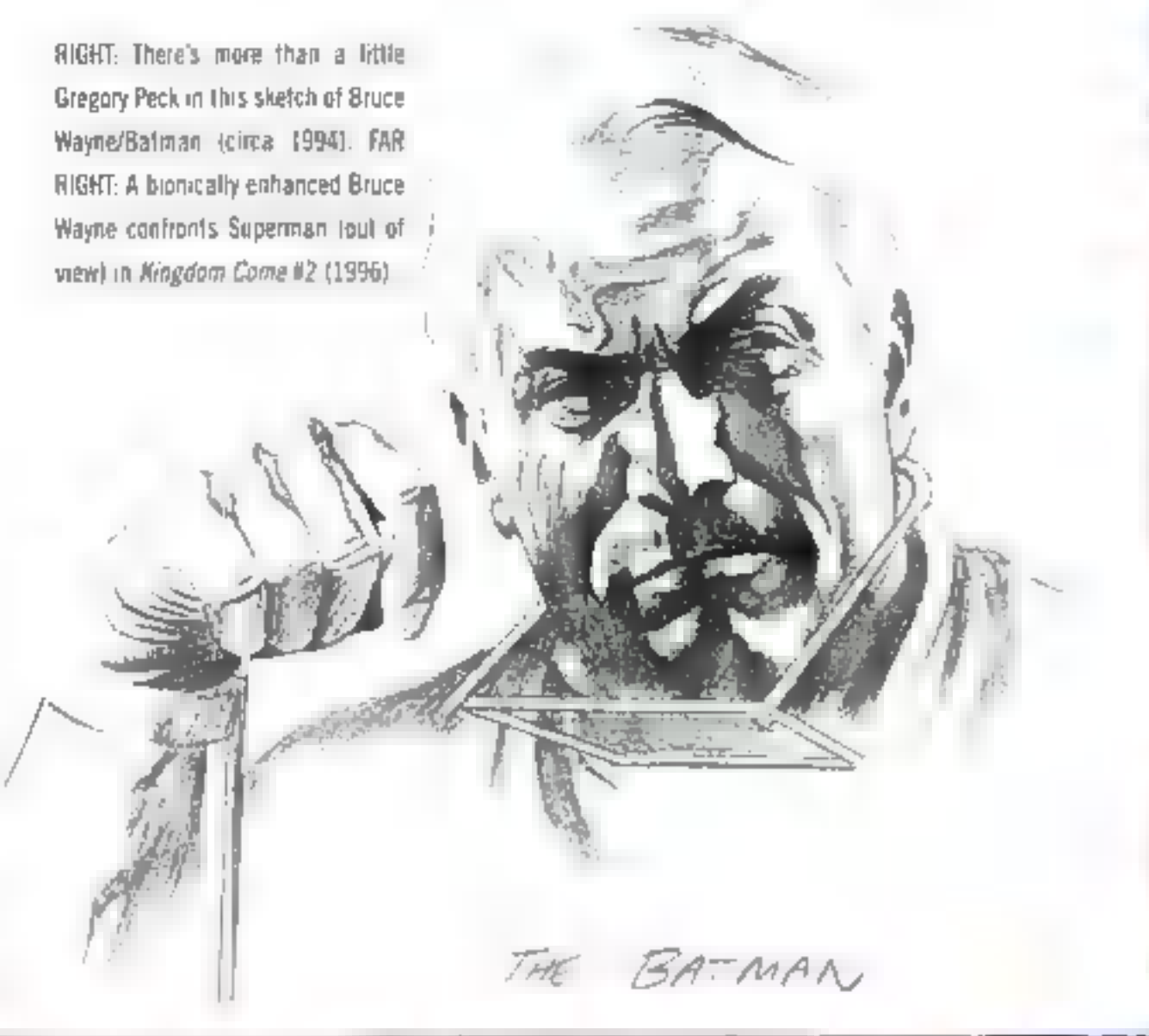
"Magog was an ideal of what America's reaction to the... of... in the... (like Rob...). The... his... the golden... is a... Superman has to bring down, the... Moses... Ultimately, ... is something of a sympathetic figure, more to be pitied... feared. After... scene, he's... muc... the story, and all... to... up...

... The Kingdom... action figure, sculpted by Tim Bruckner (DC Direct, 2003). BELOW: Art from... Come #2... OPPOSITE, TOP: Superman zaps Captain Marvel, ... rough for Kingdom... (1996).

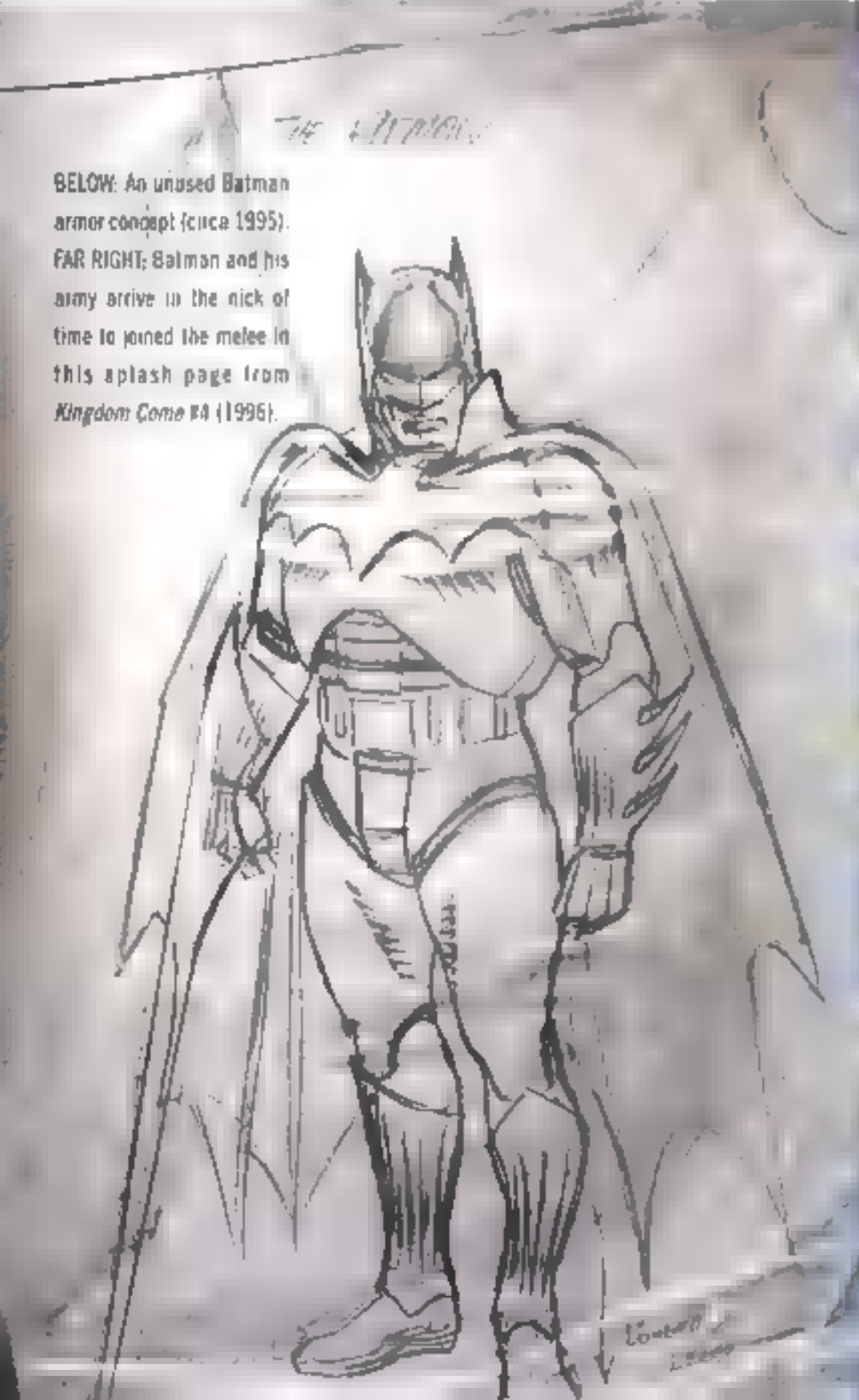




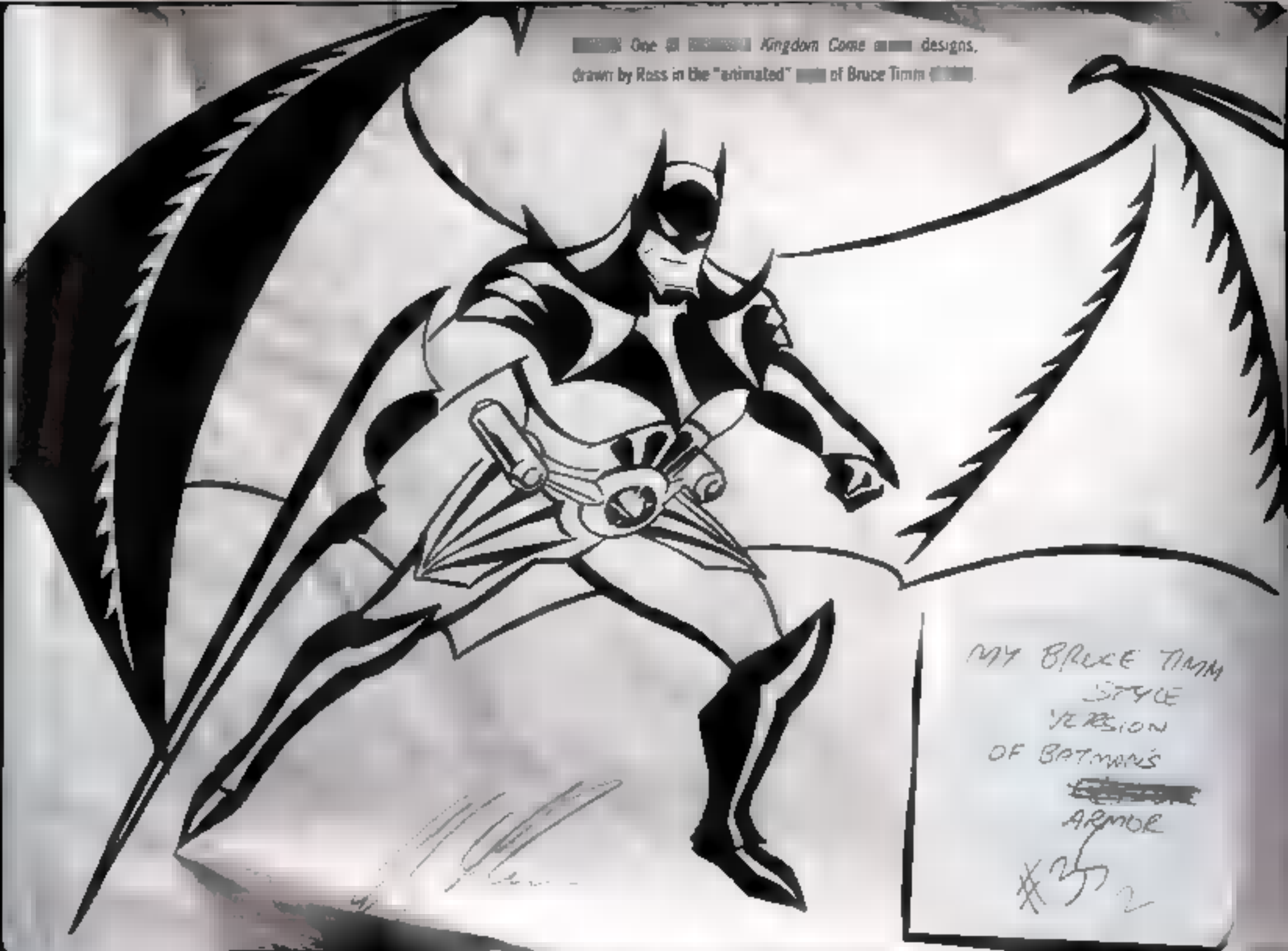
RIGHT: There's more than a little Gregory Peck in this sketch of Bruce Wayne/Batman (circa 1994). FAR RIGHT: A bionically enhanced Bruce Wayne confronts Superman (out of view) in *Kingdom Come* #2 (1996)



BELOW: An unused Batman armor concept (circa 1995). FAR RIGHT: Batman and his army arrive in the nick of time to joined the melee in this splash page from *Kingdom Come* #4 (1996).



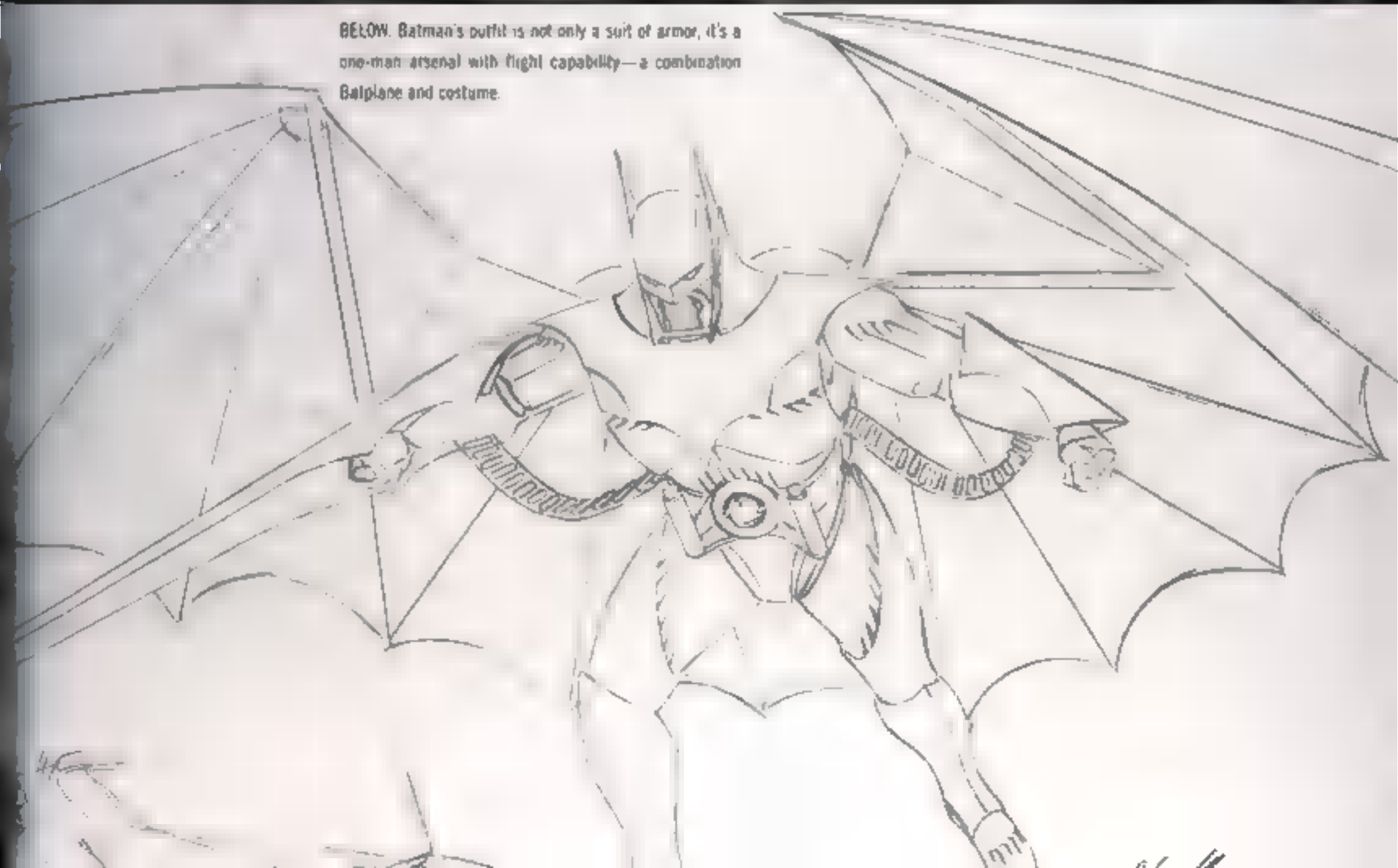
One of the Kingdom Come designs,
drawn by Ross in the "animated" style of Bruce Timm.



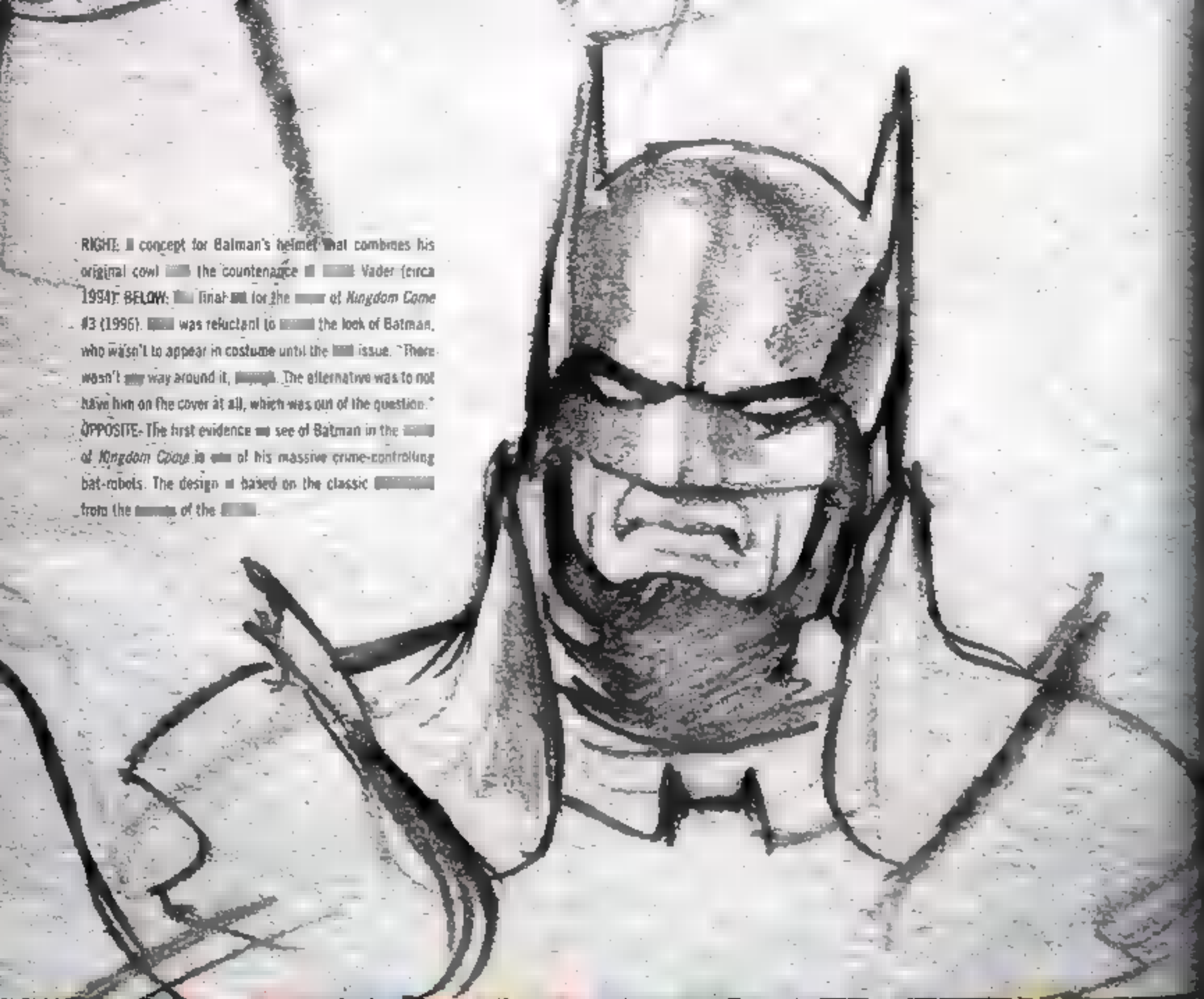
MY BRUCE TIMM
STYLE
VERSION
OF BATMAN'S
~~ARMOR~~
ARMOR

#252

BETON. Batman's outfit is not only a suit of armor, it's a
one-man arsenal with flight capability—a combination
Batplane and costume.

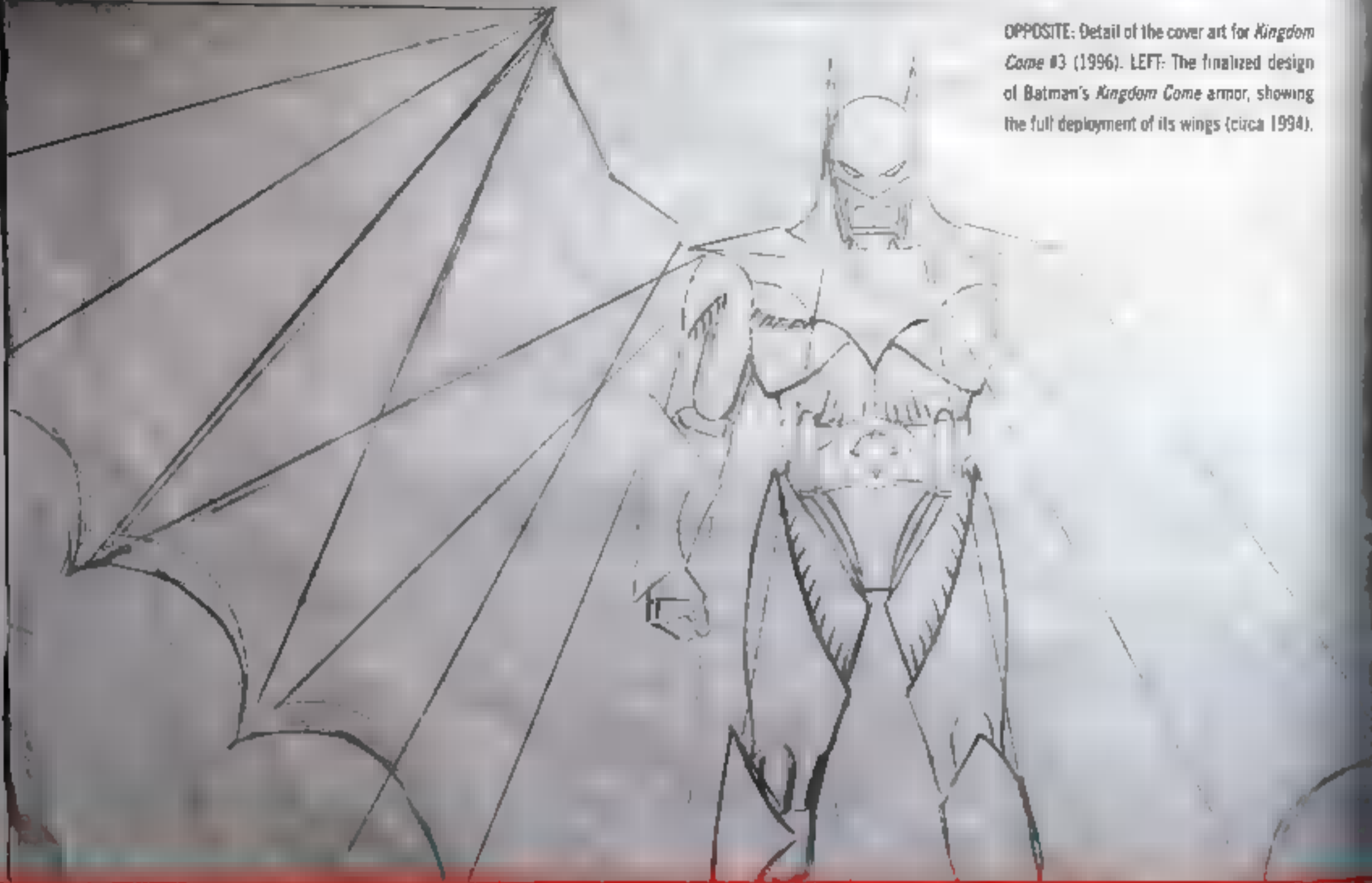


RIGHT: ■ concept for Batman's helmet that combines his original cowl ■ the countenance ■ ■ Vader (circa 1994); BELOW: ■ final ■ for the ■ of *Kingdom Come* #3 (1996). ■ was reluctant to ■ the look of Batman, who wasn't to appear in costume until the ■ issue. "There wasn't ■ way around it, ■. The alternative was to not have him on the cover at all, which was out of the question." OPPOSITE- The first evidence ■ see of Batman in the ■ of *Kingdom Come* is ■ of his massive crime-controlling bat-robots. The design ■ based on the classic ■ from the ■ of the ■.



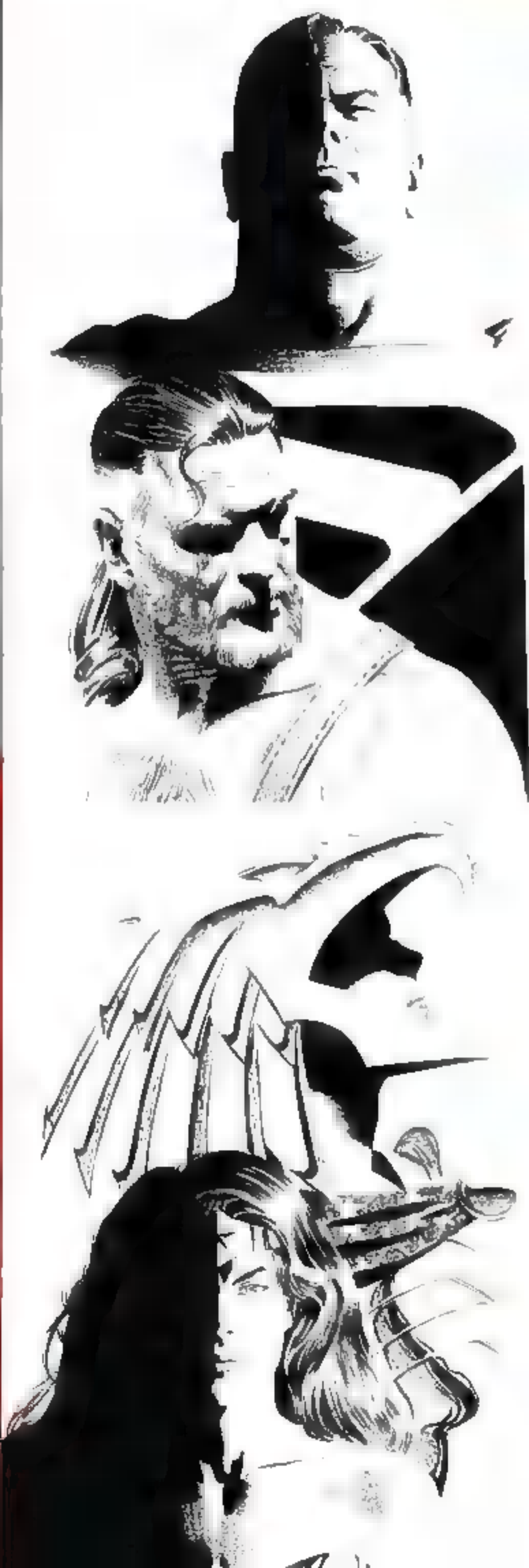


OPPOSITE: Detail of the cover art for *Kingdom Come* #3 (1996). LEFT: The finalized design of Batman's *Kingdom Come* armor, showing the full deployment of its wings (circa 1994).



FROM THE COVER OF KINGDOM COME #3 (1996). LEFT: THE FINALIZED DESIGN OF BATMAN'S KINGDOM COME ARMOR, SHOWING THE FULL DEPLOYMENT OF ITS WINGS (CIRCA 1994).





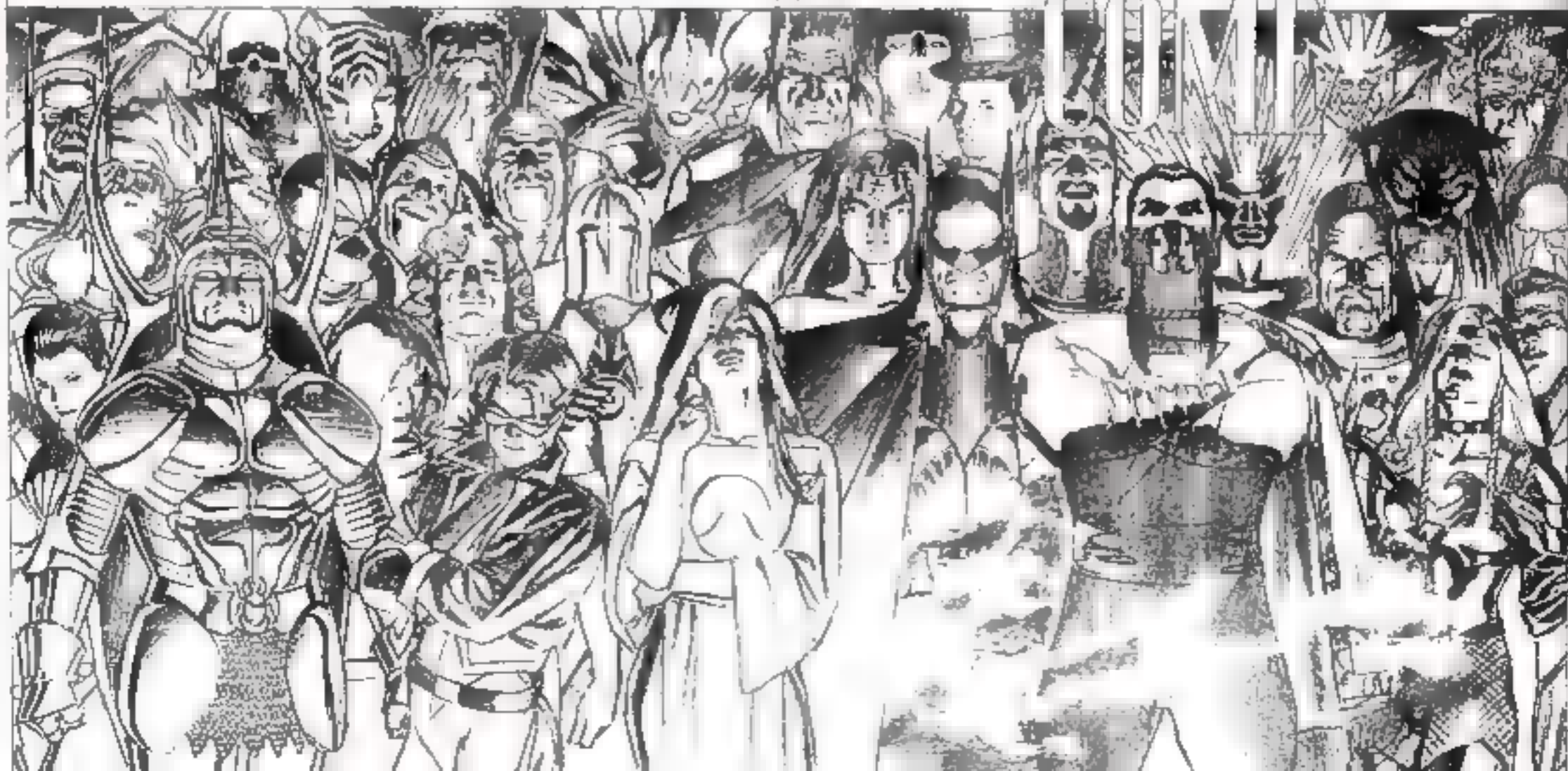
LEFT The final battle between Superman, Captain Marvel, and everyone else, in art from the novelization of *Kingdom Come* (Warner Books, 1998) OPPOSITE, FAR LEFT Chapter-title art of Superman and Wonder Woman, in and out of costume, from the novelization of *Kingdom Come* (Warner Books, 1998) ABOVE AND BELOW Part-title art for Batman and Captain Marvel, also from from the novelization of *Kingdom Come*.





ABOVE: Art for the cover of *Kingdom Come* #4 (1996) BELOW: Pencil sketch for the cover of *Kingdom Come* #3 (1996)

KINGDOM COME





LEFT: Pencil roughs from *Kingdom Come* #2 (1996), and the final art. BELOW: The Batman *Kingdom Come* action figure, sculpted by Tim Bruckner (DC Direct, 2003). OVERLEAF: The climactic battle scene from *Kingdom Come* #4 (1996), including pencil sketches and thumbnail art.





IT'S HAPPENING...
JUST AS THE VISIONS
FORETOLD!

SUPERMAN
CAME TOO LATE!
WAR HAS
BEGIN!

DO
SOMETHING!
THE LOVE
OF GOD--

--MAKE IT
STOP!!

KINGDOM COME #4: "Never-Ending Battle"/No. Page 1

MARK WAID

KINGDOM COME #4
"NEVER-ENDING BATTLE"
SCRIPT FOR FIRST 32 OF 63 PAGES
FIRST DRAFT, ROUNDER THAN BURLAP
OCTOBER 31, 1995

FULL-PAGE DELIANN. AS SEEN BY NORMAN MCCAY--THE WAR BETWEEN THE
HEROES. EVERYTHING IS HAZY, BLURRY...NO DISTINCT IMAGES, BUT
CHAOS NONETHELESS

- 1 CAP: "There were VOICES... and THUNDERING... and LIGHTNING..."
- 2 CAP: "...and an EARTHQUAKE"
- 3 CAP: This was my DREAM...



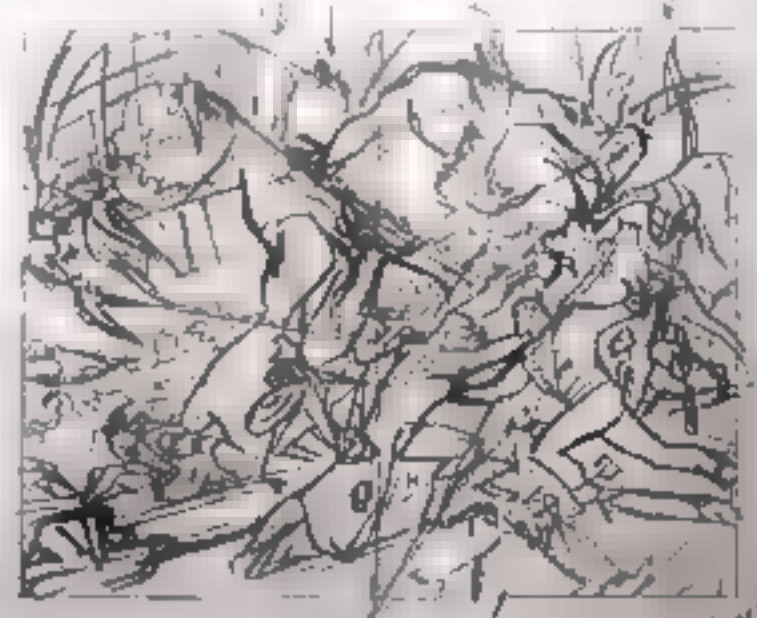
KINGDOM COME #4: "Never-Ending Battle"/No. Page 2

MARK WAID

PAGES TWO-THREE

TWO-PAGE SPREAD. IT'S NO DREAM. WE REALIZE AS WE JUMP TO A
CRYSTAL-CLEAR FOCUS. WE ARE AT WAR. CAPTAIN MARVEL AND SUPERMAN
DOMINATE IN THE FOREGROUND. THE EARTH CRACKING BENEATH THEIR
STRIDES. BEHIND THEM, THE WAR RAGES AND PRISONERS CONTINUE TO
SPILL OUT OF THE GULAG
LIGHTNING. LOW CLOUDS.

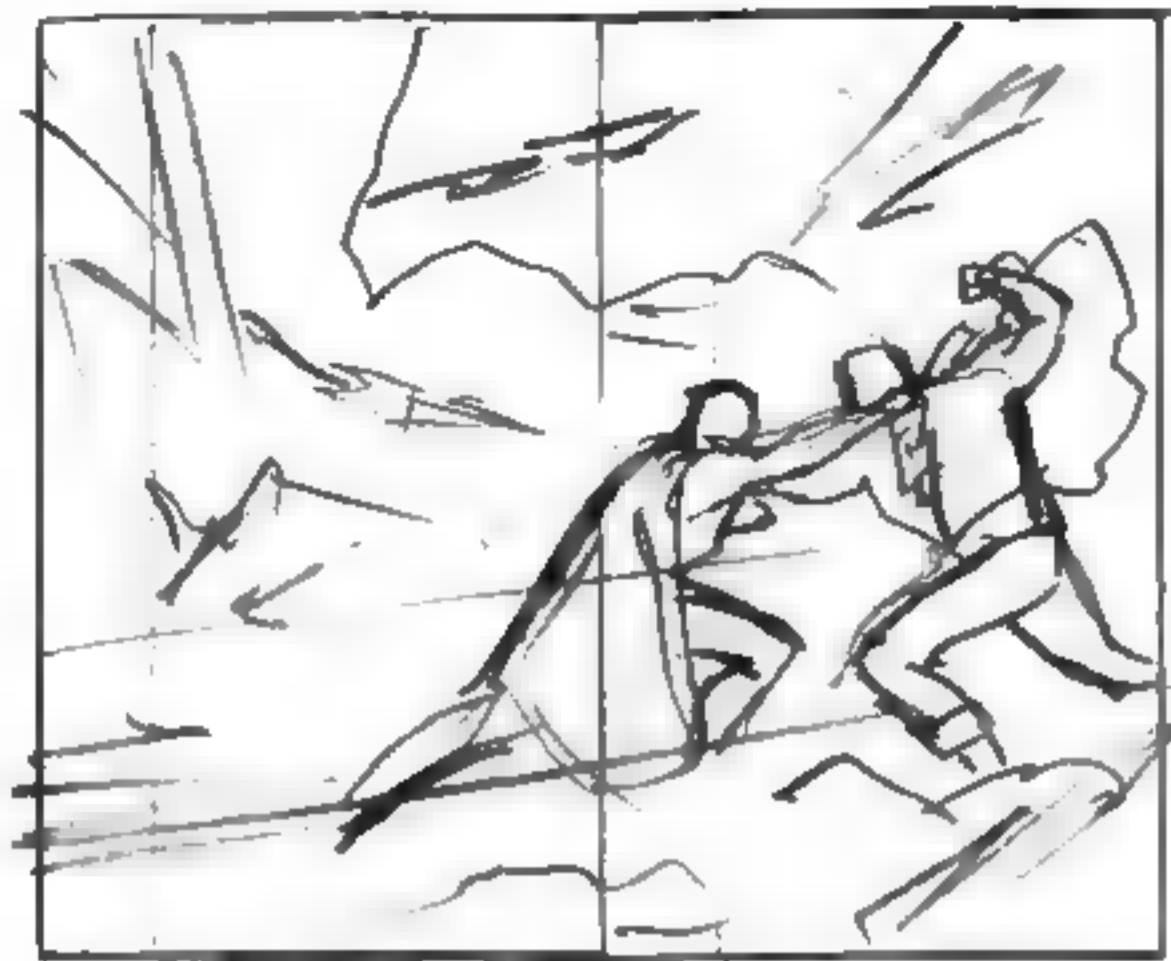
1 CAP: ... no MORE.



GLOW ON
MARVEL'S
GLOVES
GROUND SPLINTERING
UP

ABOVE: Pages from Mark Waid's script for the climactic battle scene that opens *Kingdom Come* #4, annotated with sketches by Ross. OPPOSITE: Additional pencil thumbnails for the scene. The final painting is revealed inside the gallery. Note how little the composition changed from initial conception to finished art.





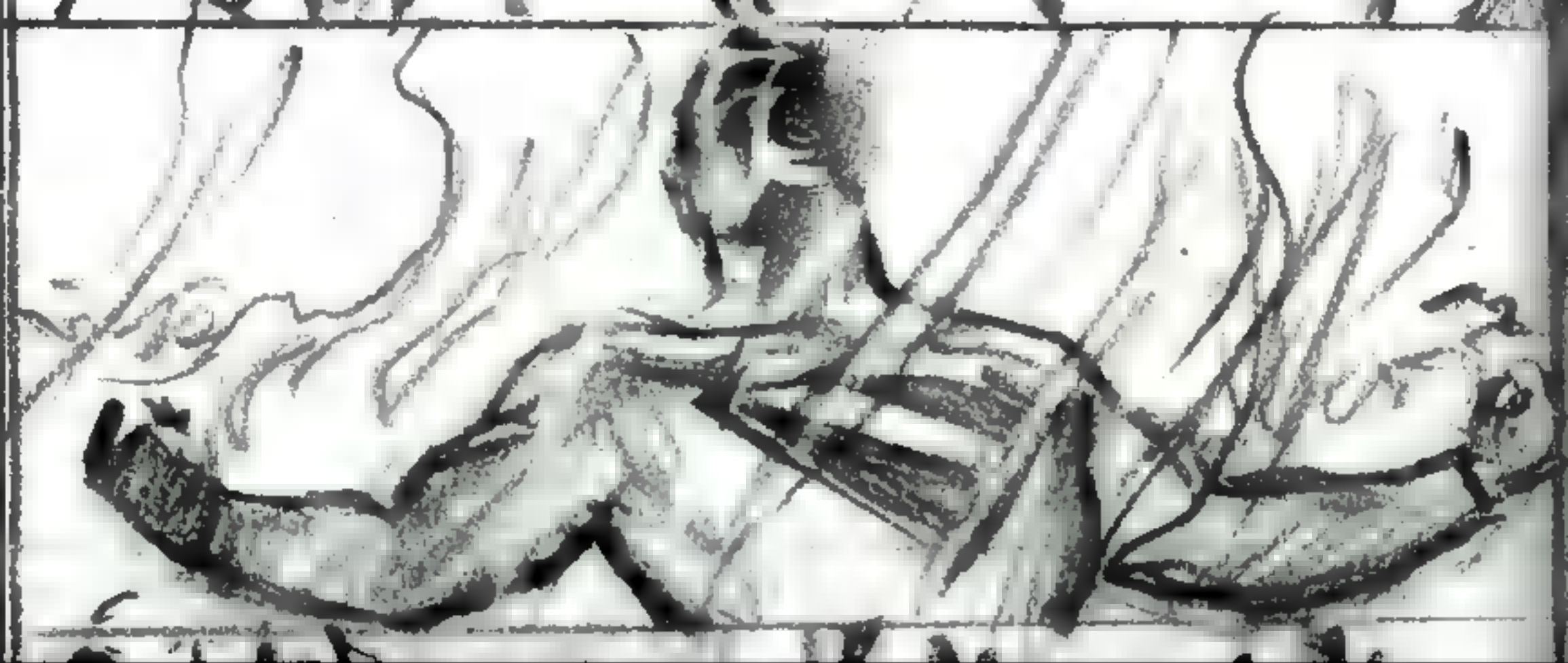
2
WAR SCENE
KEY SHOT

3
SPREAD —
MARVEL &
SUPERMAN

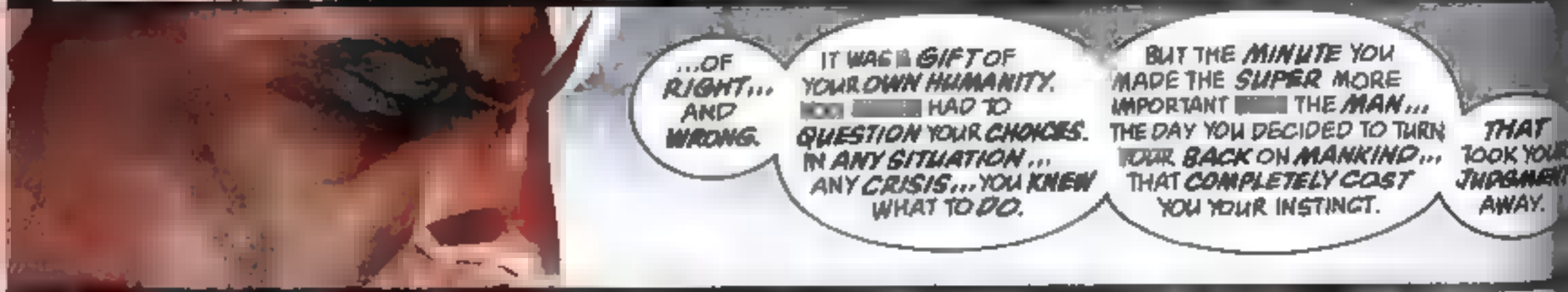


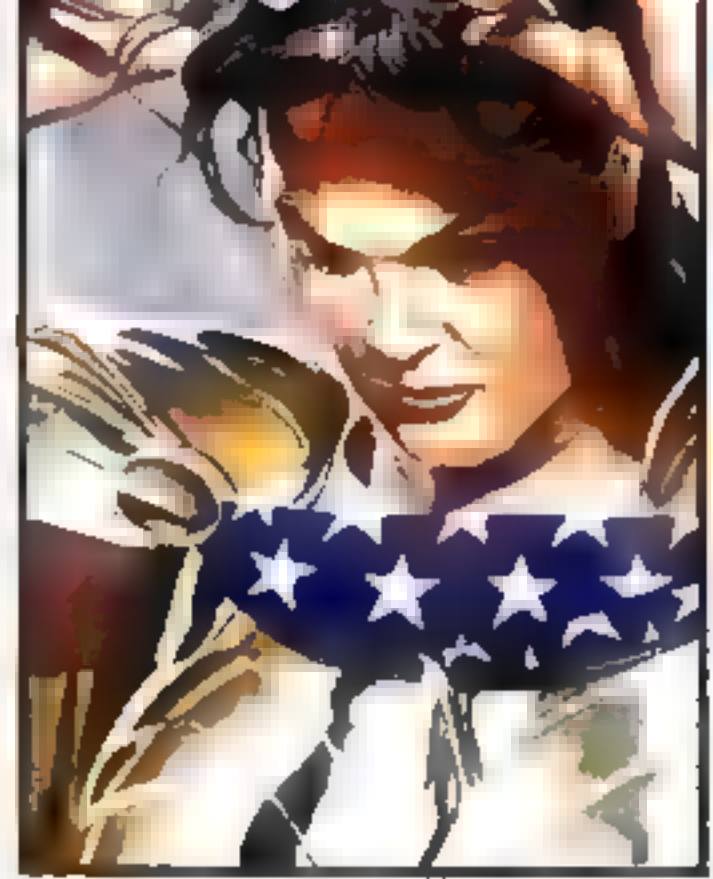
Batman, far right, joins the battle in this illustration for the cover of the 1997 *Kingdom Come* trade paperback edition. (Note the tiny figures of McCay and the Spectre off to the left.) Shortly after this scene, a UN-sanctioned nuclear bomb is deployed in hopes of annihilating them all. With seconds to spare, Superman finally snaps Captain Marvel out of his delirium, and Marvel, in the ultimate act of self-sacrifice, intercepts the bomb before it can fall to Earth. The resulting blast wipes out all but a handful of the characters, as Superman, enraged, rises from the ashes and speeds to the UN to confront his attackers.





ABOVE: Superman cries out in rage after the devastating nuclear explosion that has killed most of the Justice League and its enemies alike. Thumbnail design for *Kingdom Come* #4 (1996). BELOW: Norman McCoy reminds Superman of his responsibility to mankind and himself in this penultimate scene from *Kingdom Come* #4 (1996). OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: McCoy, safely back in the pulpit, at the end of the story. The red-headed man in the final panel in the right is Jim Corrigan, the Spectre's human form.





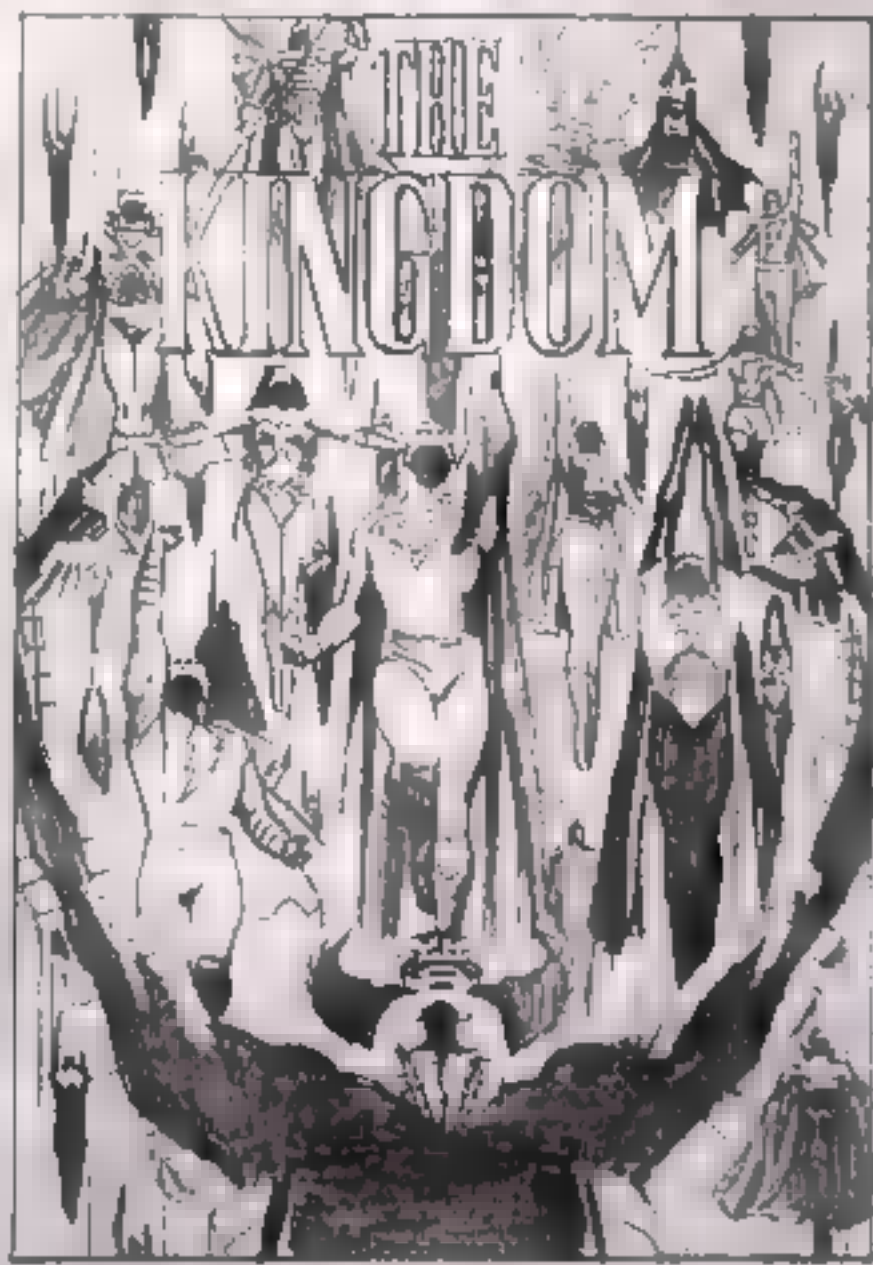
That a dreamer is not always a prophecy

That the future...

ABOVE: The surviving heroes arrive at the UN to confer with its leaders. In the far back row, Ross has added the creators of each of the characters as an homage. To the left of Wonder Woman is William Moulton Marston, and to the right is artist Harry Paton. Writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster flank both sides of Superman's head, while Martin Nodell is to the right of Green Lantern. On either side of Batman is artist Bob Kane (left) and writer Bill Finger (right).



GRACE BE WITH YOU ALL.
AMEN.



PROPOSED FIRST ISSUE COVER



THE COVER CONCEPT MAY NOT NECESSARILY BE LITERAL TO THE STORY BUT WORKS WELL TO REPRESENT AN ANGLE WHERE THE HEROES ARE DEALT WITH IN THEIR PERSONAL IDENTITIES.

LEFT: Sketches and notes for covers of *The Kingdom*, a "prequel" to *Kingdom Come* as Ross would have seen it (1996). OPPOSITE: Rough sketch for a trade ad for *The Kingdom* (1996).



A FUTURE CONFLICT BROUGHT TO LIFE IN A DELUSION GIVEN TO SUPERMAN BY THOSE WHO WOULD WANT HIM TO FEAR THE FUTURE.



GOG



FAR LEFT: Superman gets a jolting visit from his future self in this cover sketch for Ross's vision of *The Kingdom* (1996). ABOVE: Before there was Magog, there was his mentor, Gog. Or would have been, anyway (1996).

Plans for a sequel, *The Kingdom*, never came to pass as Ross envisioned it. His few preparatory sketches are seen on these two pages. A mini-series with that title was eventually produced, but Ross was not involved. "I was going along with DC's suggestion to do a prequel, and yet take it a step forward in an unexpected way. Magog would kill Gog, his mentor, which would set off a chain of events with cataclysmic results." How would it have



THE EAGLE



THE BAT



THE THUNDER



THE DREAMER

THE KINGDOM

THE FUTURE IS NOW. MONTHLY FROM 

ended? "It ultimately would have suggested that *Kingdom Come* wouldn't necessarily come to be—that it coexisted with the present, a resurrected Earth 2, and is a warning to not repeat the fate of this alternate reality, leaving the current DC heroes to find a different future. It's probably for the good that we didn't go through with it. *Kingdom Come* is supposed to be something of an ending, and it's best left that way."



UNCLE SAM.



After the phenomenal success of *Kingdom Come*, Ross found himself in an awkward position: He could name whatever genre he wanted to do next, but he chose *Uncle Sam* is a testament to his willingness to grow beyond the comic hero genre into the realm of serious political and historical commentary. That Ross was willing to follow him there and support such a politically controversial character is due to small but loyal faith.

Working with editors Bruce Berger and Jean Bilty, Alex and writer Steve Darnall produced a unique combination of James Montgomery Flagg, *The Mickey Mouse Club*, and *The Twilight Zone*. *Uncle Sam* depicts what appears to be a homeless man's delirium and his attempts to cope with first-hand memories and visions of America's history—many of them horrific and terrifying—while wandering through a landscape torn by both present and past in a nation's landscape.

The action starts with mid-century Americana as a young man, "Sam," is dragged by a truck and finally released as he mutters seemingly incoherent phrases like "I am not a patriot" and "We begin bombing in 30 minutes!" and "What a mess it is in one's mind..."

ABOVE: Book jacket art for the *Uncle Sam* hardcover edition (Vertigo/DC Comics, 1999).
MIDDLE: Ross and Darnall's work, as seen through him in *Uncle Sam* (1997).
OPPOSITE: Unpublished concept sketch for the cover of the *Uncle Sam* paperback.

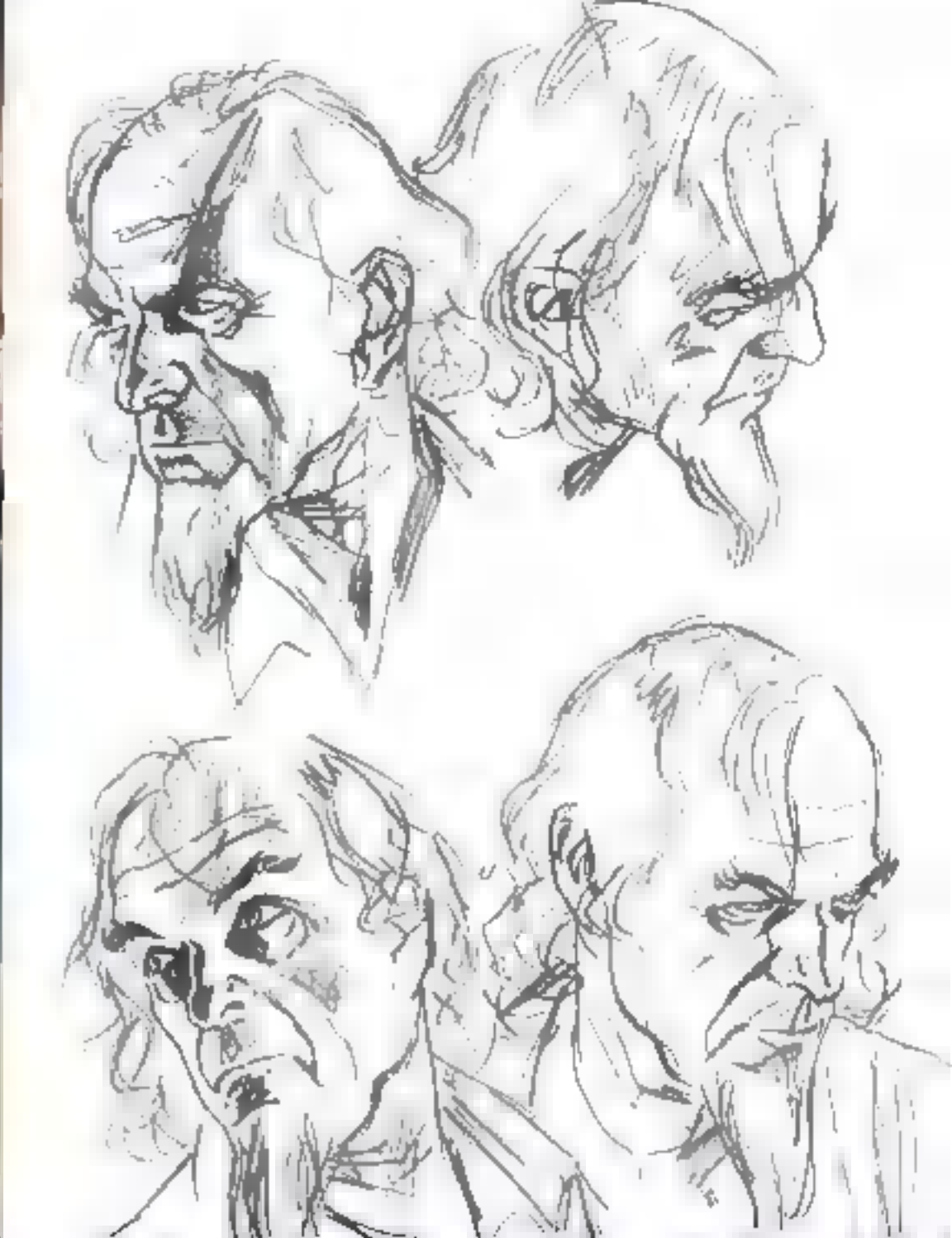


I WANT YOU
FOR U.S. ARMY
NEAREST RECRUITING STATION

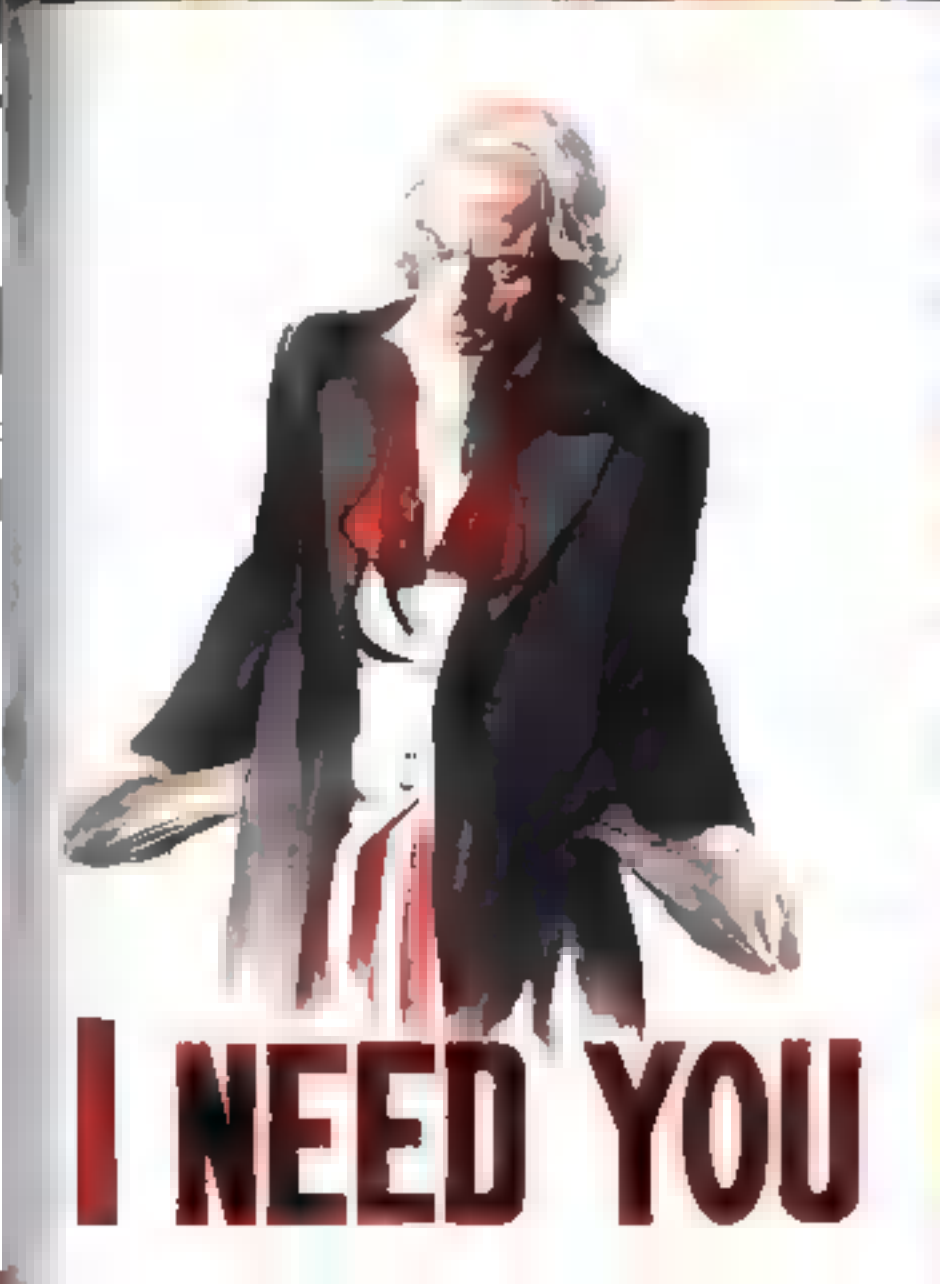


ABOVE LEFT: Original Uncle Sam "I Want You" U.S. Army recruitment poster by James Montgomery Flagg (1917). ABOVE: Uncle Sam model Mike Reilly poses for *Uncle Sam #1* (1997). BELOW LEFT: Sketch for the cover of *Uncle Sam #1* (1997). BELOW: Cover art for *Uncle Sam #1* (1997). "Each of the two covers for *Uncle Sam* symbolize taboos concerning the American flag. The first is walking on it. The second is burning it."





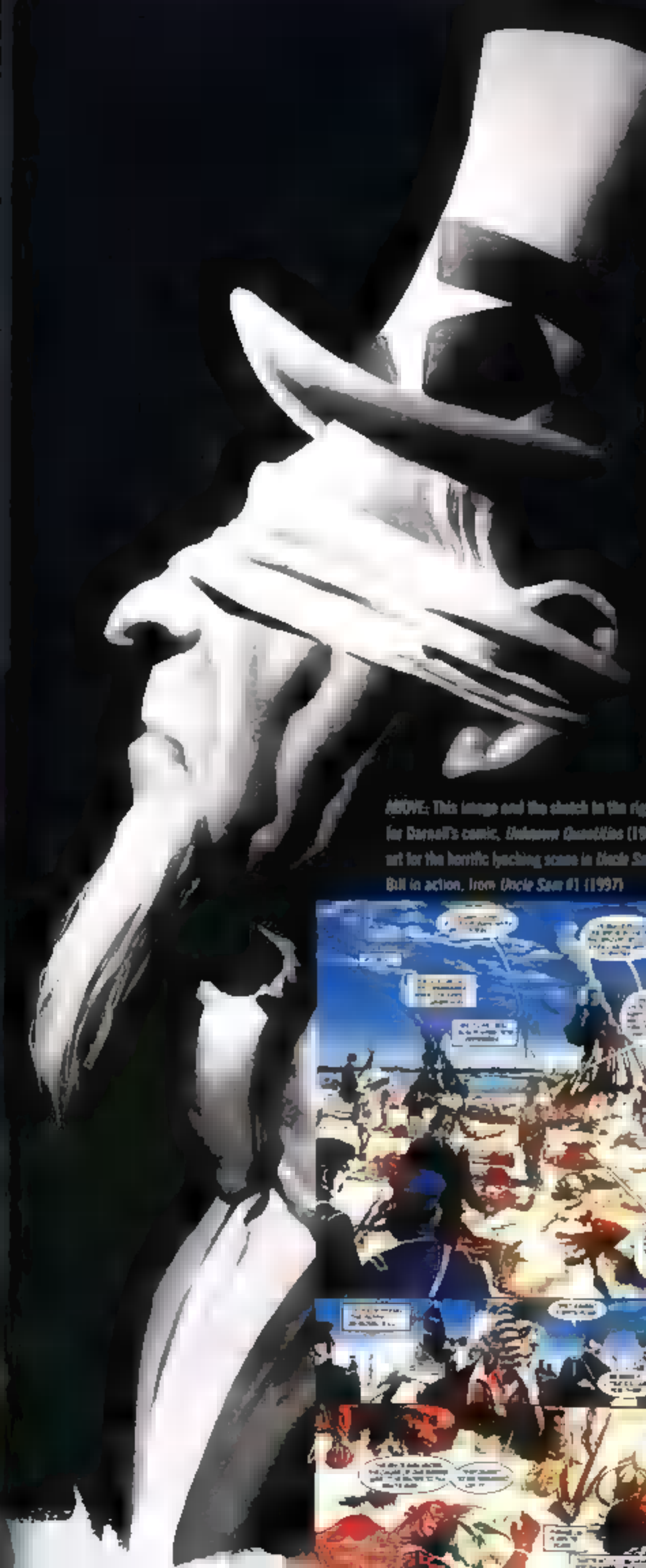
ABOVE, LEFT: Eugene Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) is re-interpreted by Ross for a sequence in *Uncle Sam & 2* (1997). ABOVE, RIGHT: Preparatory studies of Uncle Sam (circa 1996). BELOW, LEFT: Ross's version of the classic Flegg poster. Promotional art for *Uncle Sam* (1997). BELOW: Sam is hearing things, and "news jockey" gives him a lesson about speaking in this scene from *Uncle Sam #1* (1997).



ACTUALLY I THINK IT WAS 'GENTLEMEN IS SEATED' - BUT

'THE CRIMES OF THE GUILTY LAND WILL NEVER BE PURGED! EVERY WITH BLOOD!'

RIGHT HEARD THEY HANGED HIM



"It wasn't that I was against doing another super hero story," says Ross. "This was an opportunity to do something that spoke to our history, our cultural ideas, and the role of government. Uncle Sam represents the status of the nation's heart—I think as a symbol he's been discarded. There was something about Flagg's 'I Want You' poster that made me want to bring it to life ever since I was a kid." Alex soon found *Uncle Sam* to be the most challenging project he'd ever taken on. "It was technically the hardest thing I've ever worked on because it required so much more research than the super hero stuff. Purely real world, and obviously everything had to be historically accurate. Lots of books on antiques were necessary to get the exact period details."

Any attempt to recount the history of the United States is ripe for bias, but writer Darnell maintains he didn't slant the story to serve any specific agenda, liberal or conservative. "*Uncle Sam* doesn't lean politically one way or the other," he says. "I think it's a humanist take, like a 90-page intervention to a friend with a serious problem—is it better to be an enabler or use tough love?"



THE UNSEEN

ABOVE: This image and the sketch in the right was made after the *Uncle Sam* series for Darnell's comic, *Unknown Quantities* (1998). OPPOSITE: Thumbnails and finished art for the horrific lynching scene in *Uncle Sam* #1 (1997). BELOW: The Indian Removal Bill in action, from *Uncle Sam* #1 (1997)

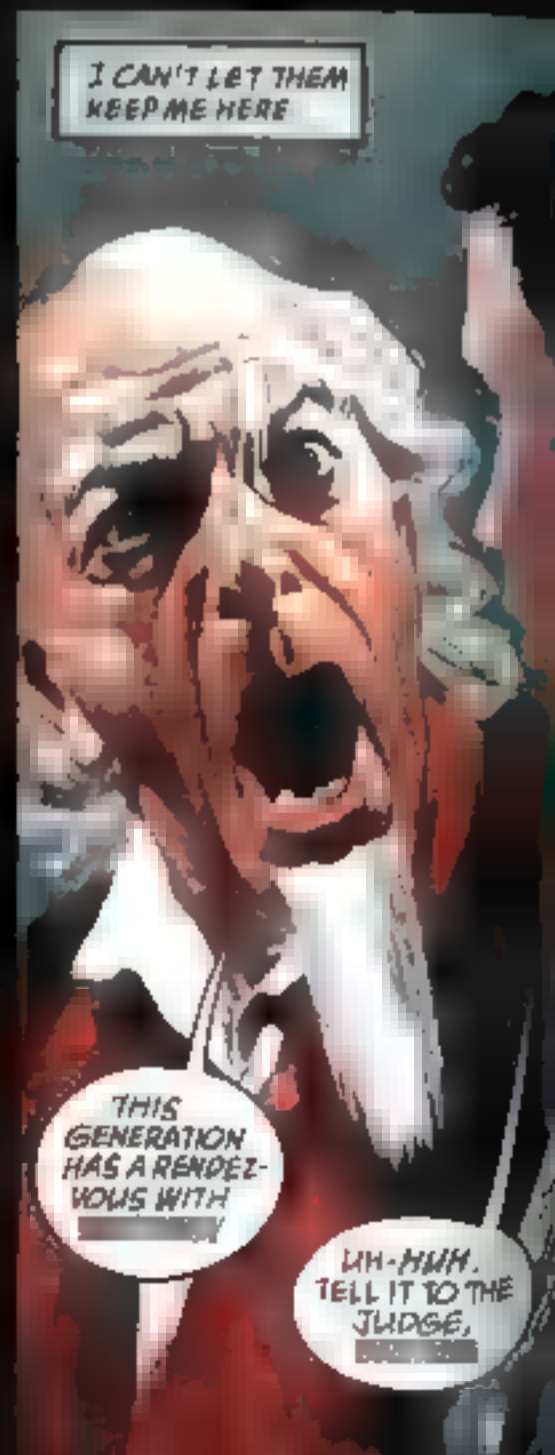


...the great history of the
 ...the old man through carrying
 ...across ...
 ...fraud, ...
 ...cruelty,
 ...into ...
 ...watching him ...
 ...monuments of ...
 ...U.S., ...
 ...him to the edge of madness,
 ...and ...
 ...of the ...
 ...idea of a nation ...
 ...of the ...
 ...in ...
 ...more ...
 ...than ...
 ...finally ...
 ...how it
 ...was, ...



How was *Uncle Sam* ...
 ...and ...
 "Abroad,
 the ... was much more favorable
 than it was ...
 in ...
 ...mystery, ...
 it surprised me at the time. For ...
 it was the one thing I'd done that
 ... the notice of ...
 ... Alas Moore."

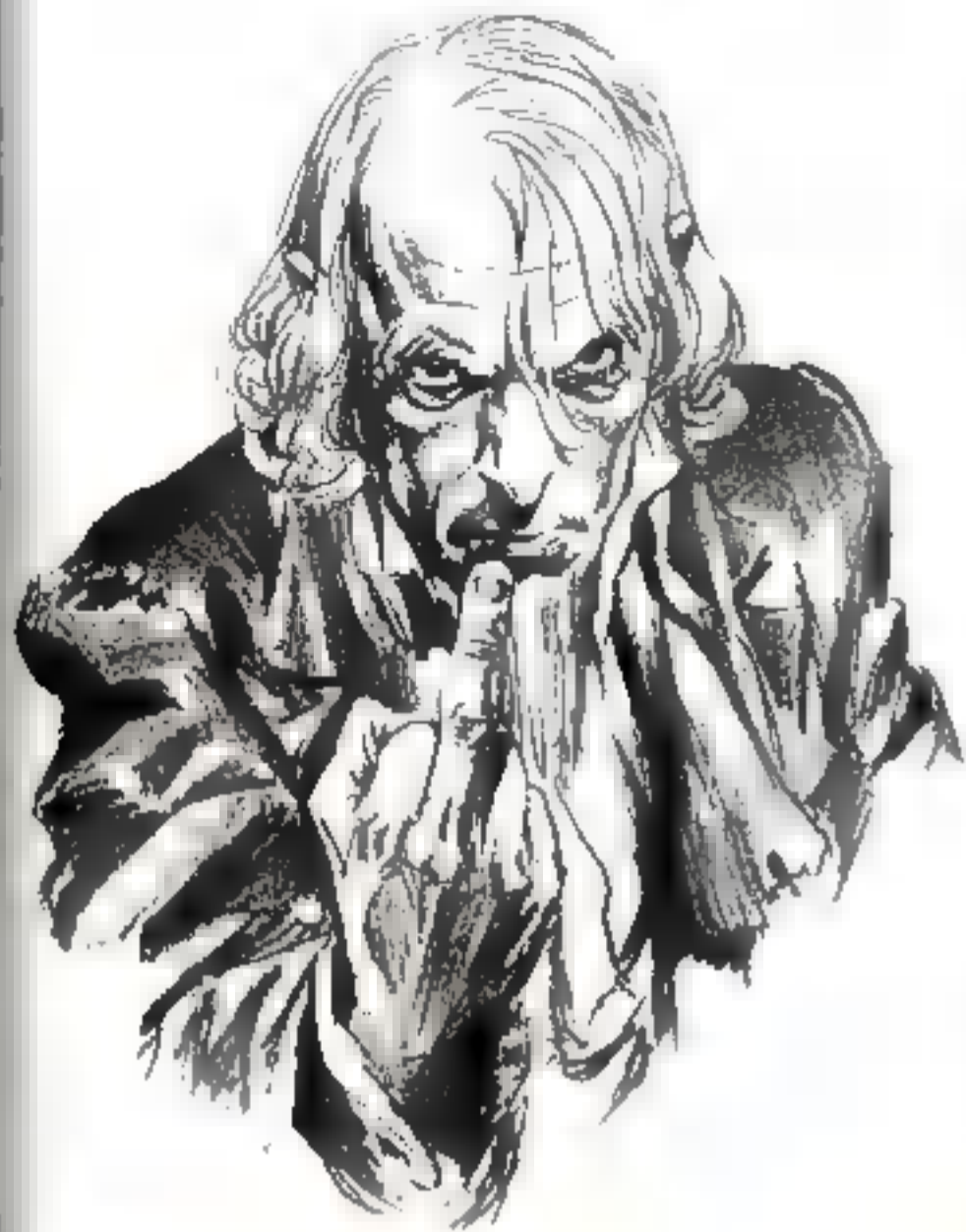
And did Alex learn ...
 ... from ...
 ... on the ...
 "Oh, my God,
 yes. It didn't ...
 but it ... me put my ... into ...
 ... The heart of this ...
 ... supposed to be ... on ideas, but
 ... those ...
 ... manipulated from the ...
 ... As
 ... we got rid of the British, ...
 ... the British."



I CAN'T LET THEM
 KEEP ME HERE

THIS
 GENERATION
 HAS A RENDEZ-
 VOUS WITH

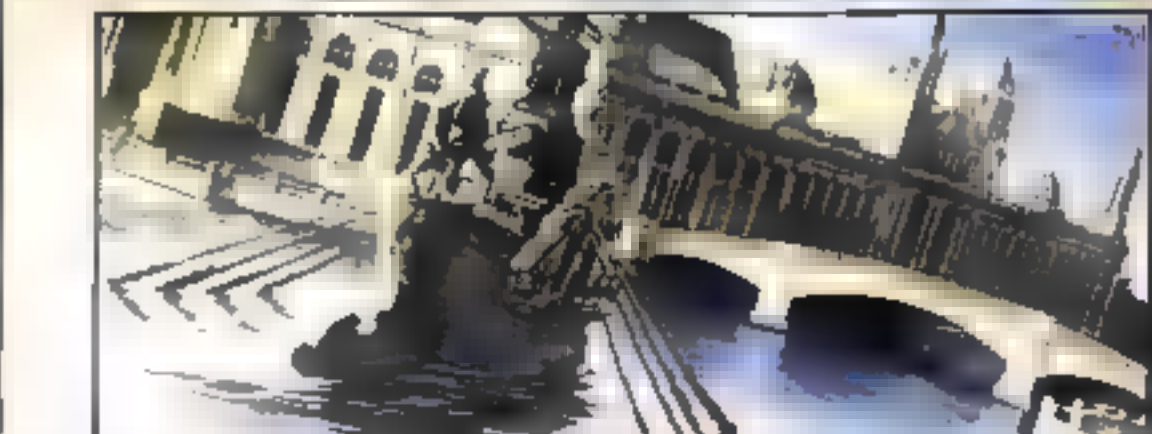
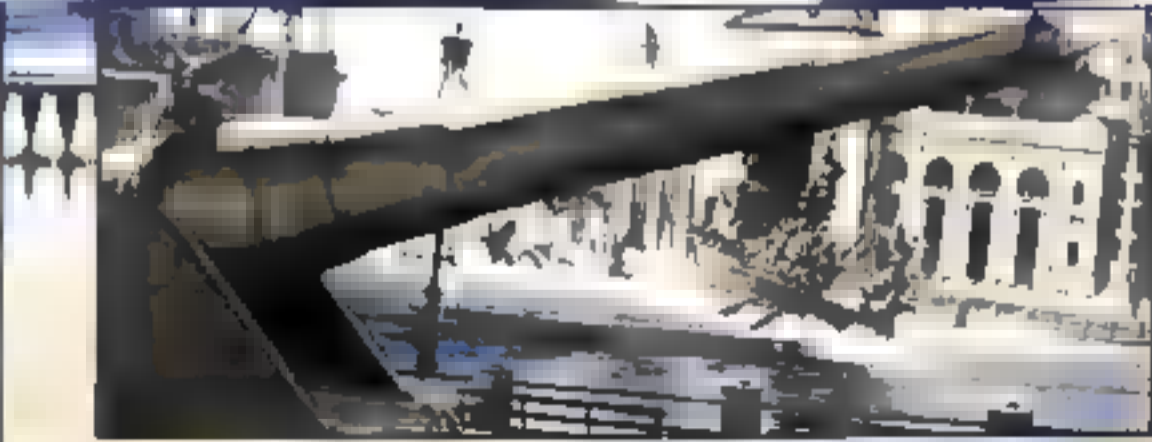
UH-HUH.
 TELL IT TO THE
 JUDGE,



"I think a good measure of how
 that says 'Freedom' is
 the spirit of 'Freedom' and that's
 the main point of *Uncle Sam*.
 America is a work in progress,
 and you can't finally say it's a
 success, because it's never over;
 Jefferson was a revolutionary
 and so."

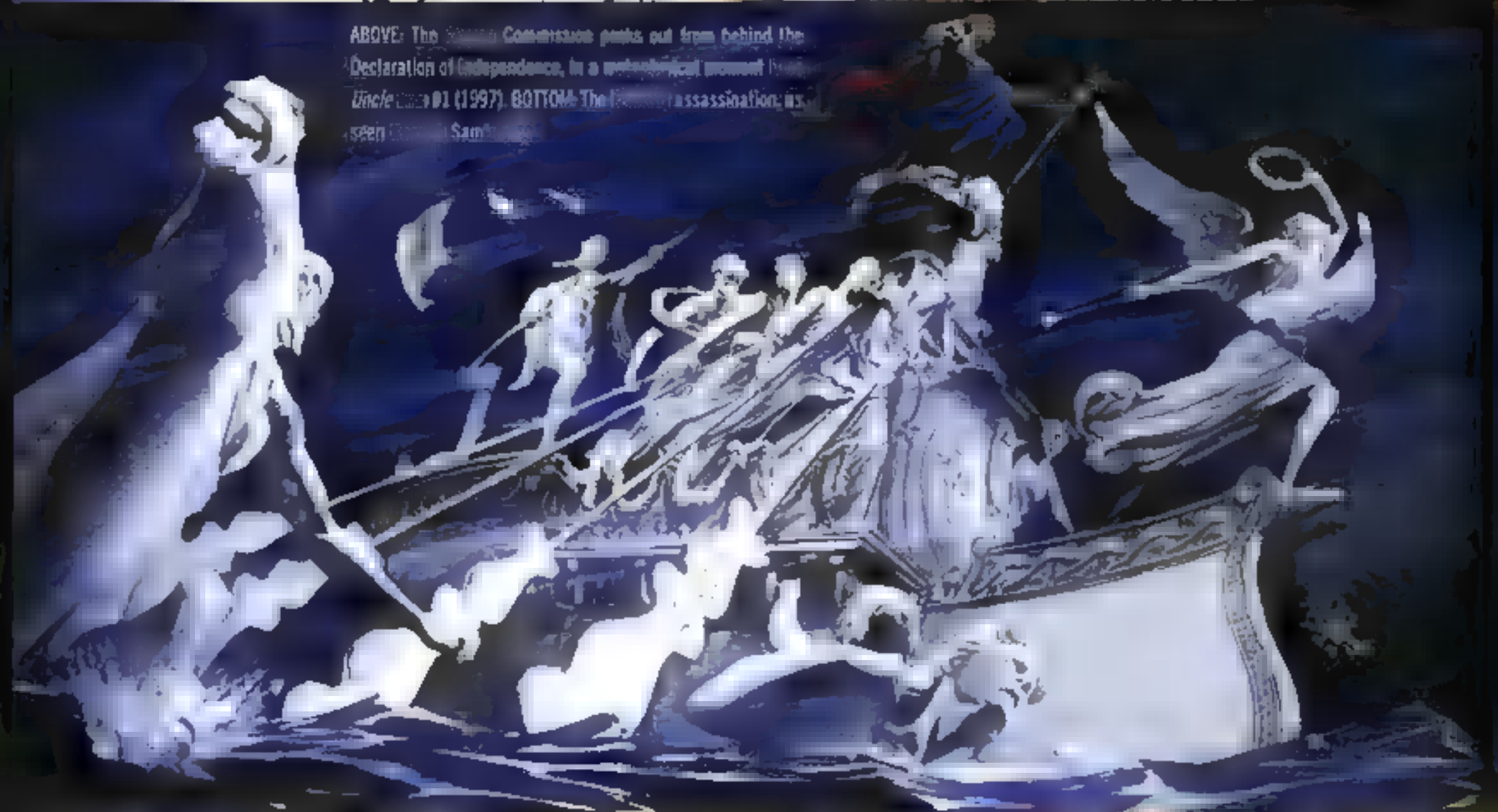
—GARY DUNN

OPPOSITE, LEFT: Art for an *Uncle Sam* print for the San Diego Comic-Con (1997). OPPOSITE, RIGHT: Sam quotes Ronald Reagan in this panel from *Uncle Sam* #1 (1997). LEFT: This radical take on James Montgomery Flagg's iconic poster was deemed too provocative for the jacket of the *Uncle Sam* hardcover, (1998). BELOW: The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, complete with Columbus herself, in a stunning sequence from *Uncle Sam* #2 (1997).





ABOVE: The Select Committee peeks out from behind the Declaration of Independence, in a metaphorical moment from *Uncle Sam '91* (1997). BOTTOM: The assassination is seen through Sam's eyes.



LOW: Uncle Sam and Britannia in repose. Cover art for
the UKCAC convention program (1997) BOTTOM: Vintage
poster featuring Uncle Sam and Britannia (1918):





1943) Art by Reed Crandall. ABOVE: Pencils for a dramatic tableau (below) from *Uncle Sam* #2 (1937)



THIS IS AN OBVIOUS ALLEGORY TO THE CONCEPT "BLOOD ON HIS HANDS" AND OR "BLOOD ON THE FLAG".

P. 44
OR
45



← BLOOD FLOWING DOWN LIKE STRIPE BANDS ON THE WALL BEHIND HIM.
(SHOULD HE AT SOME POINT BEFORE PASSING OUT SAY "I SEE STARS"?)

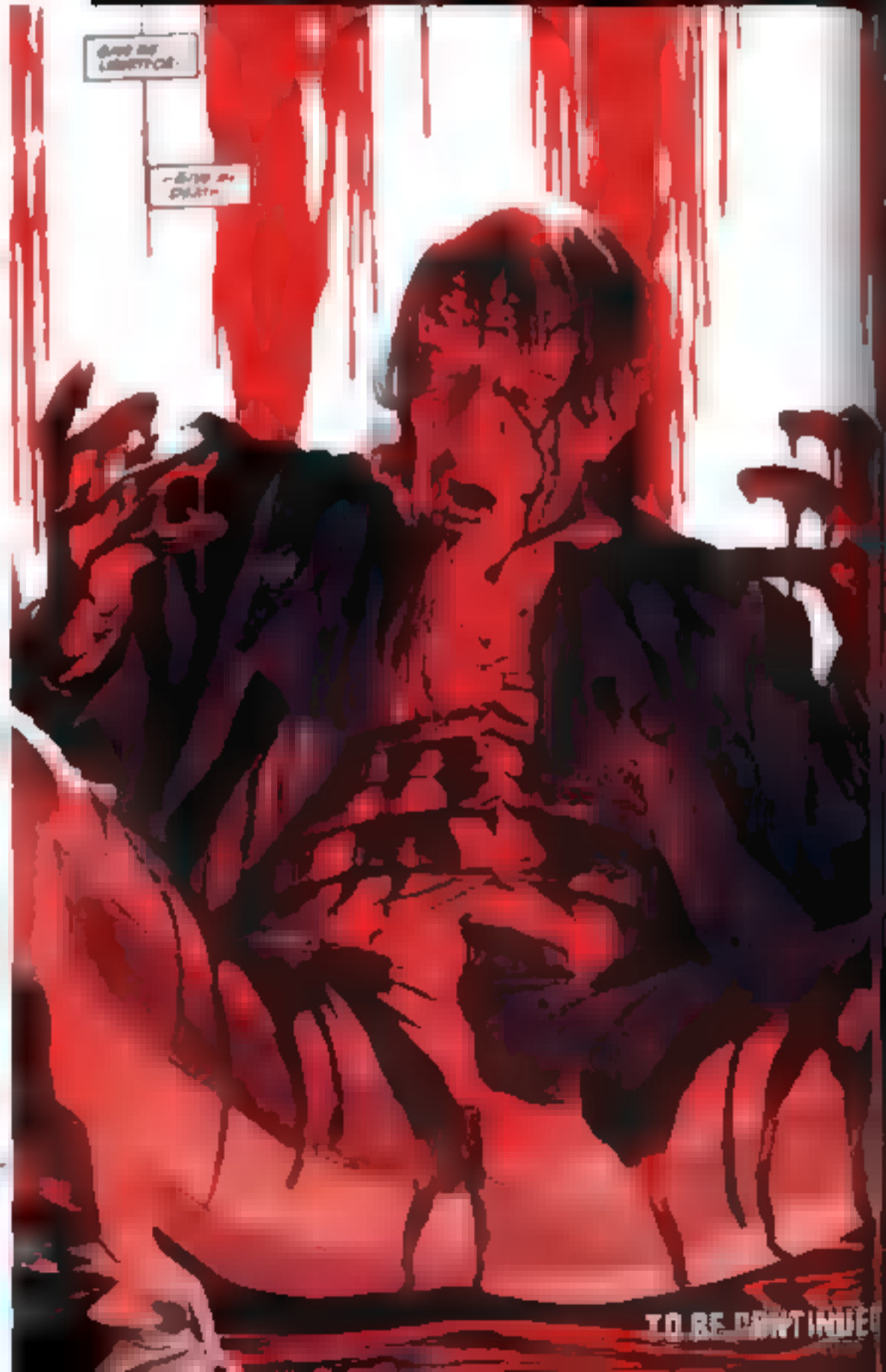
CHARLIE MEETS UNCLE SAM

THIS IMAGE PLAYS TOWARD THE IDEA THAT THE SOLDIER'S BLOOD IS ON HIS HANDS, SOME KIND OF PAVEL ~~WOULD PRECEDE~~ THIS, FOLLOWING THE CHAY'S REBELLION (AND POSSIBLY ADDITIONAL WAR MARTYRDOM FROM OTHER POINTS IN HISTORY) AND SETTING UP HIS GUILT FOR ISSUE #2.



"The most eloquent use of a superhuman archetype for a great many years. Darnall and Ross have with *Uncle Sam* produced a luminous and moving study of America's iconographic landscape, at once an indictment and a reclamation of the nation's oldest and most venerable symbol. As a portrait of a fond American dream at last waking to itself, *Uncle Sam* is genuinely inspiring and deserves to be read more than once. Highly recommended."

—ALAN MOORE





LEFT: Art for the *Uncle Sam* T-shirt (Graphitti Designs, 1997), which was merged with a collage of faces for the final (lower left).
BELOW: Sketches for the cover of *Uncle Sam* #2 (1997). The ink splatters on the cover.
OPPOSITE: Sketches, notes, and the final art for the last page of *Uncle Sam* #1 (1997).



Uncle Sam's probably the most important symbol of the United States. He's been in the past decade or so. Friggin' scary, and ... all the ways that ... to all the things that one ... be ...

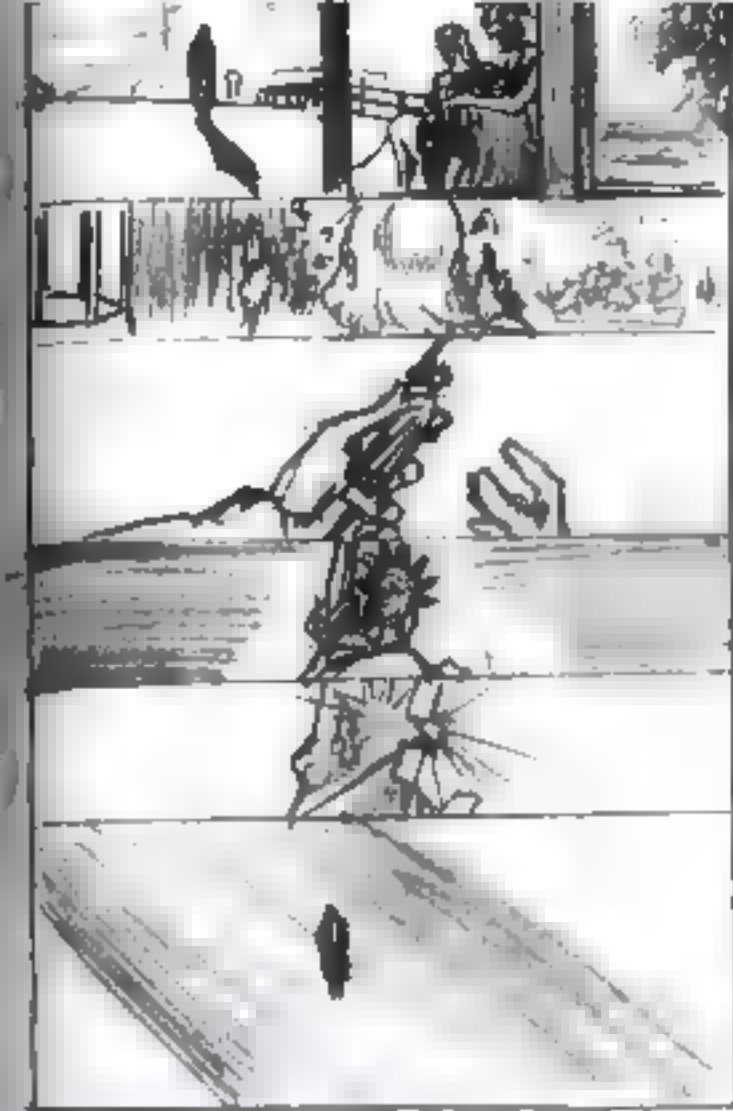
BOB MARSH



ABOVE: Art for the cover of *Uncle Sam* #2

OPPOSITE: Pencil rough and final art

and ultimate scene of *Uncle Sam* #7 (1997)



"THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF FREEDOM . . . YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.
AND THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW HOW FREEDOM WORKS . . . IS TO WORK AT IT."

—from *Uncle Sam* #2 (1997)







OPPOSITE: Sam confronts his corrupted "self" and takes one on the chin in the finale of *Uncle Sam #2* (1997). THIS PAGE: Ultimately, Sam's purity of spirit and willingness to admit his mistakes enables him to successfully challenge his darker side and literally blow it away. From *Uncle Sam #2* (1997).



IT'S A STRANGE AND FRIGHTENING THING--

--TO SEE YOURSELF AT YOUR WORST.



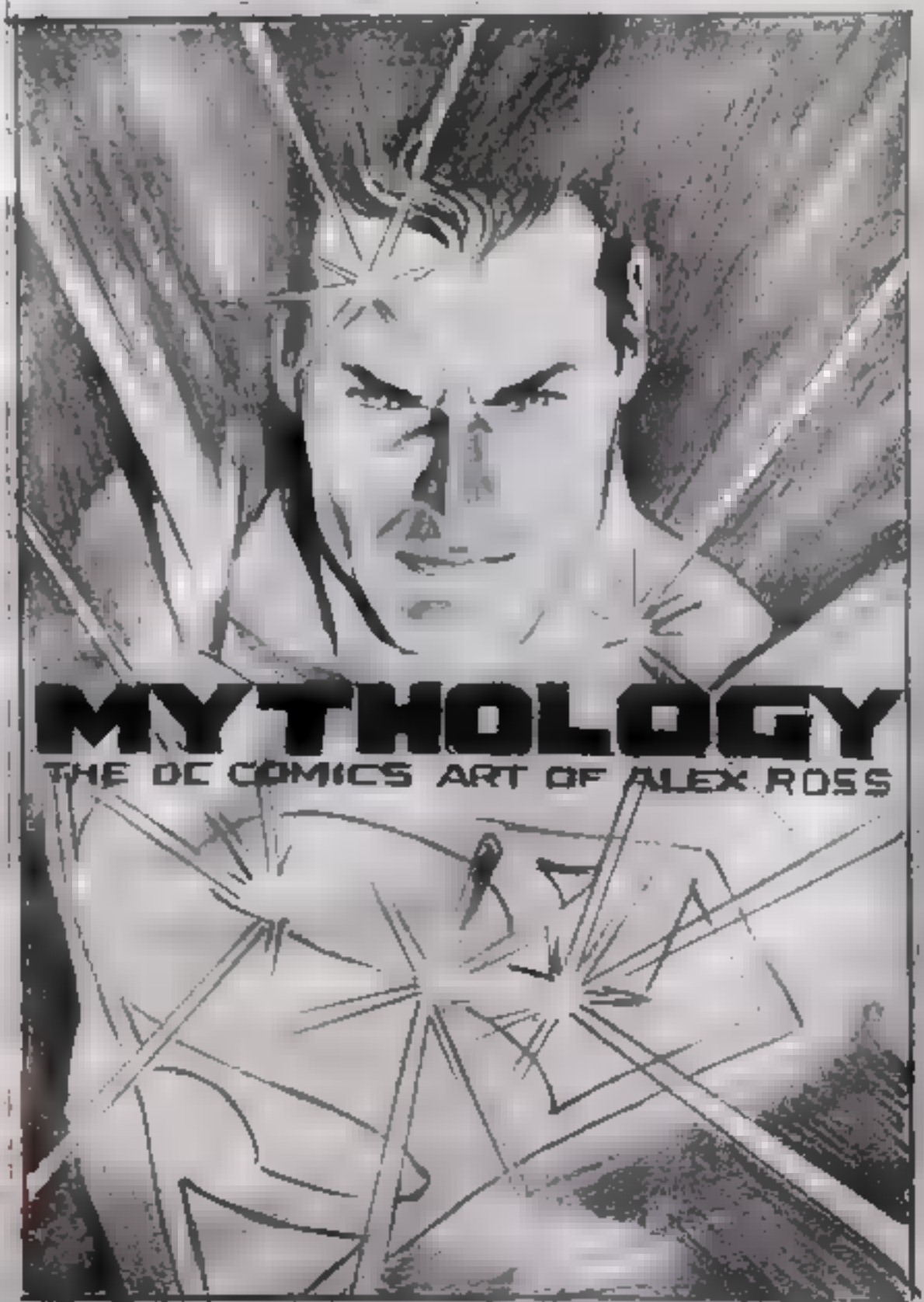
The first cover concept — Superman flying head-on at the viewer — was suggested by the author but deemed too similar to one of Ross's earlier paintings.

THE **DC** ART
OF
ALEX ROSS



Ross suggested that the same lighting and position of the head could be maintained, while ~~adjusting~~ changing the figure's stance. The light source would now come from bullets ricocheting off of his chest. This design also allows Superman's iconic "S" to literally shine. (Ross ~~sketches~~ sketches a sketch of a DC Comics logo from the early 1970s, just for fun.)

Not used as typography running through the middle of his work, Ross nonetheless tried it and was surprisingly pleased. The fact that this design has so much impact even reduced in black and white is a very good sign — the final execution could only increase its power.





THE PROCESS.

What *is* the way to document how Alex works than to document the making of his best work? We discussed several ideas over the phone—I'd seen a previously unpublished hero painting of his that we used as a starting point. It featured a Superman-like character flying directly at the viewer, lit from below. He didn't want to do it exactly, so he adapted it to a different pose, keeping the lighting and confrontational tone. The addition of a bullet through the chest worked for both of us because they were a light source that also symbolized strength. I also liked the implication that the reader was shooting the book, like I shot me.

He showed me his sketches on an 8-1/2 x 11 sheet (opposite). I emailed the photo to the book's right to size on our Xerox machine, and he sent it around a blank book dummy, and presented it to the editor-in-chief for approval. Even in its original black-and-white form, you could tell it had everything: instant excitement, iconic presence,

solid composition and, frankly, a pretty face. And since we know what the book is, it was easy to picture it in color.

With the design approved, I was ready to take reference photos. Ideally, the model may or may not be in full costume, depending on the character. Backgrounds can vary, too, though I know that Ross has a small photo studio of his own (see page 10). What matters is the right subject. "The connection to a great piece of art to the work, and feeds the imagination, which is not infinite, I wish it were, but it's not. If all I've got is a reference, then everything I do would just be a reference. Interacting with a model gets me back in the real world. It earns me the right to do what I'm doing."

Which, amazingly, is in watercolor. What led him to the medium of gouache? "Trial and error. Acrylic is more like a plastic—once it dries, that's it. You can't pick it up again. With gouache you can. But gouache has that range from opacity to transparency, depending on how thin you make it."

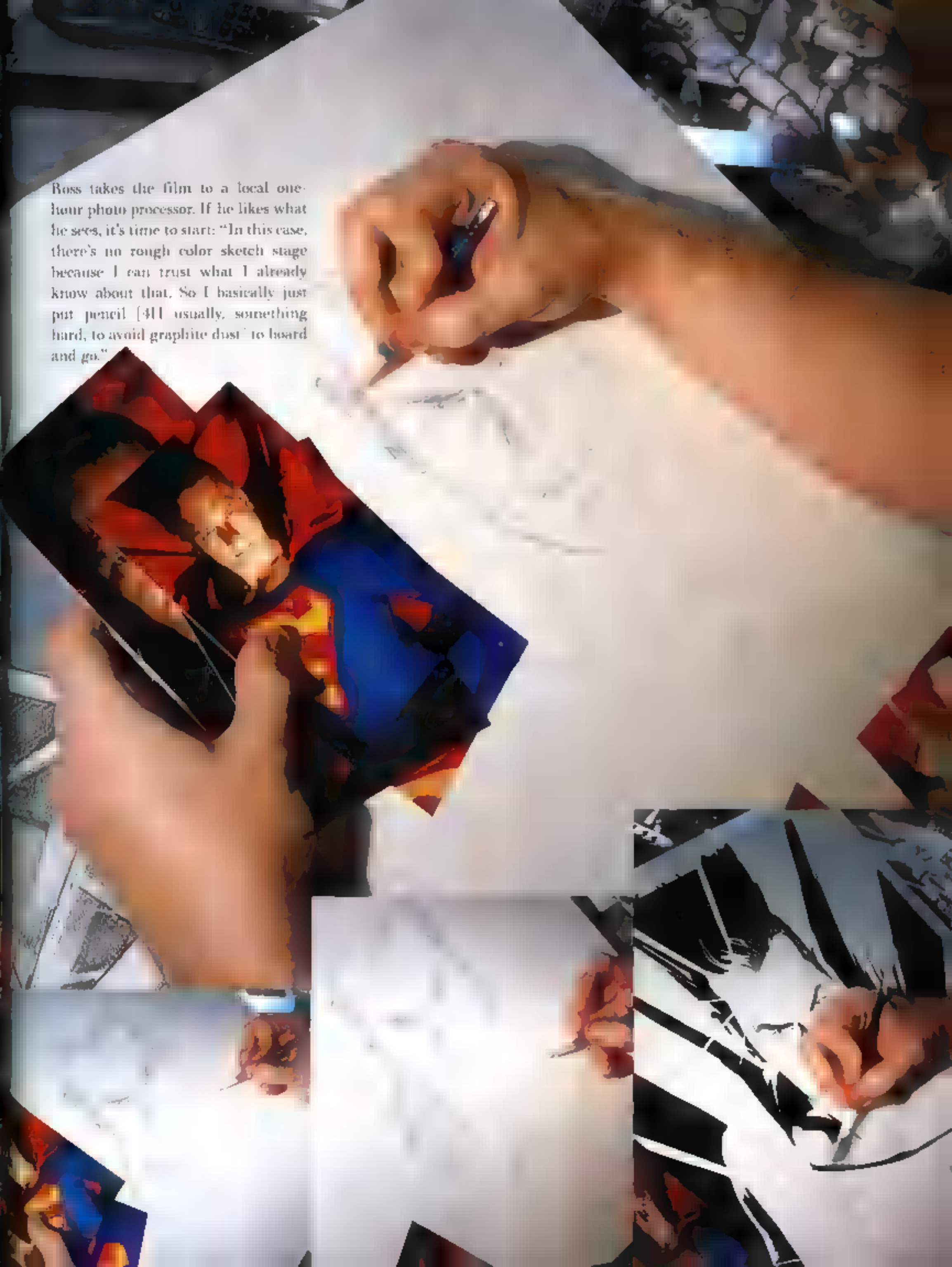
biggest challenge as an illustrator in June at the Academy of Art University. I had no idea I could do as a draftsman. It was a huge turning point. In all my grade school I hadn't so much as drawn from life. I always thought you had to make it all up out of your head, but I had I drawn



the reference photos, getting the hands right, and the lighting. The hands often get the most attention, and it's harder to get on them. That's not an issue with this piece, but it is a challenge. I don't ever feel he'd no longer be to do a Superman painting? "Sometimes. But do I have any of the sheets and painting what they have done for me? I don't know. I don't have access to the original photos. I don't have anything new to draw from. I live



Ross takes the film to a local one-hour photo processor. If he likes what he sees, it's time to start: "In this case, there's no rough color sketch stage because I can trust what I already know about that. So I basically just put pencil [4H usually, something hard, to avoid graphite dust] to board and go."

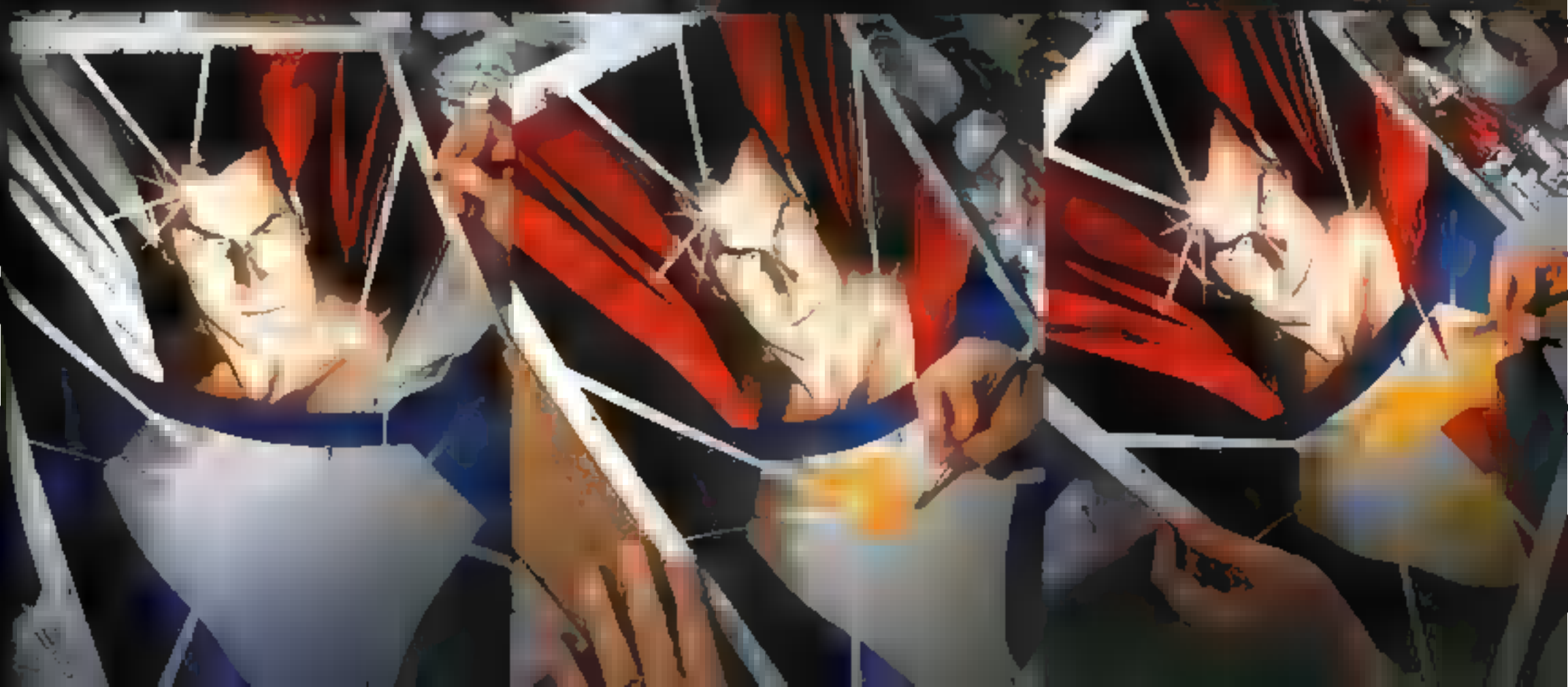


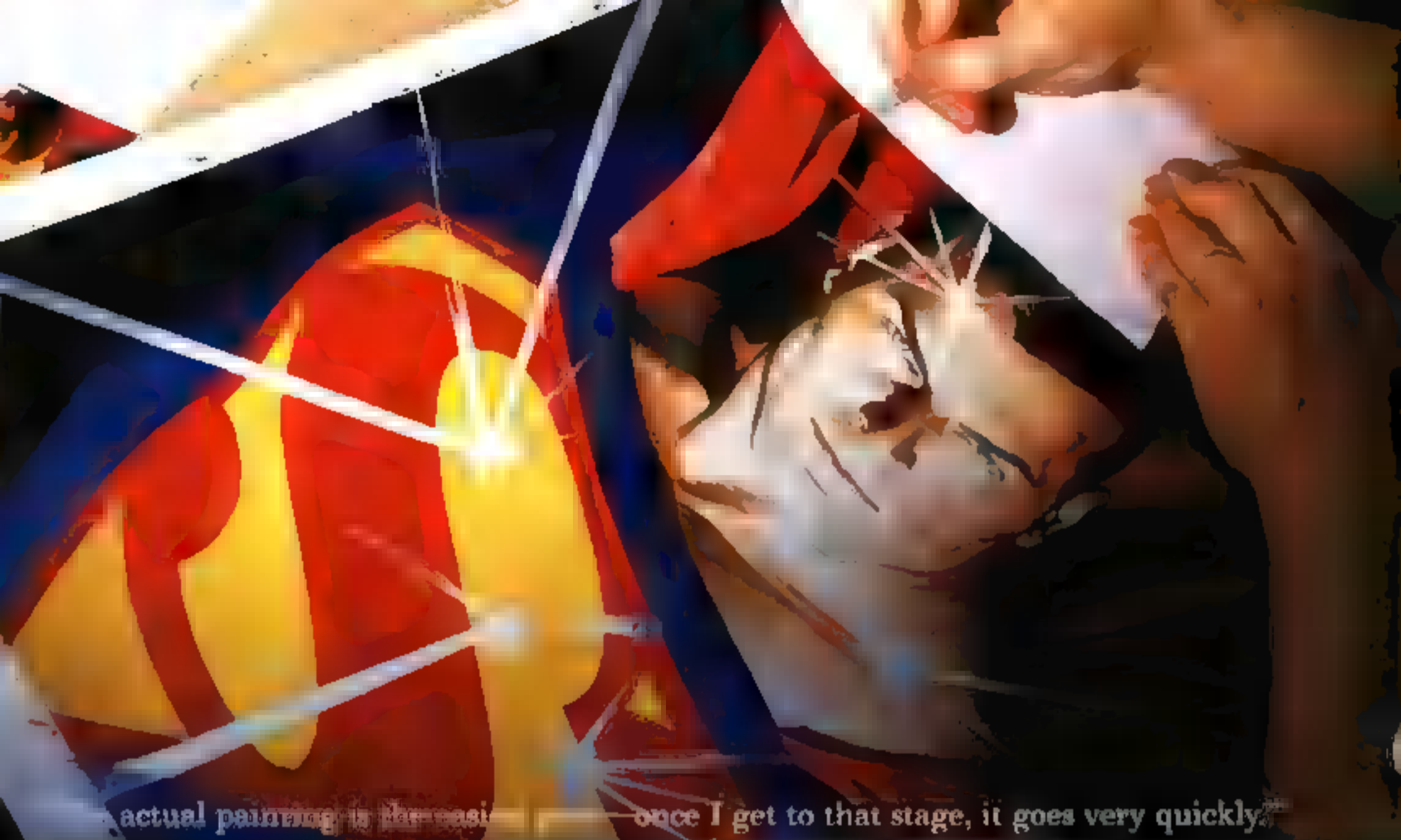


What may surprise fans of Ross's work the most is that all of his paintings are executed in fully rendered black and white. This is the hardest and most time-consuming part of the process. It's also totally unexpected because of the vibrancy of color in his pictures. "It's not that the gray tones will necessarily stay gray, because the way that you will determine the degree of color in the end will be on top of the ink tone. I learned this in school when we did ink washes. It's with the ink before we apply the color. But sepia makes it more than just simple black and white."



The most commonly asked question: How do you move the saucy color around without messing up the black? "There is some disruption, but I think that, because nothing should be hyper-saturated. The black base will hold enough to put down the amount of color that I need. It might not work for people using large brushes, but I don't—I use mainly #4 and 5 Windsor & Newton Series 7 Red Sables, which have the finest point on them. A brush may last me for about three weeks, maybe a month."

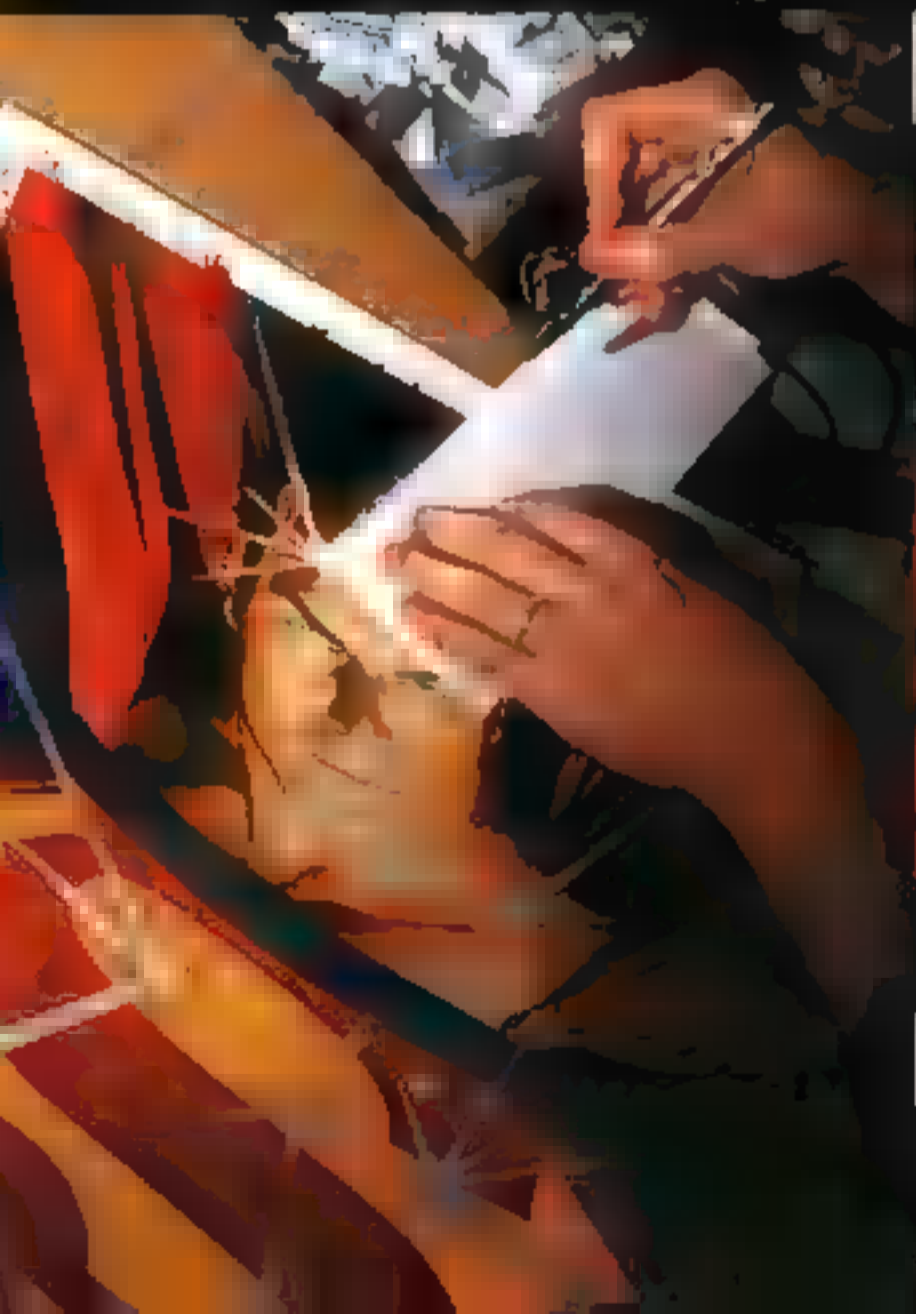




actual painting is the easi

once I get to that stage, it goes very quickly.

Airbrush is the final step. "The medium I like the least. It's as technical as I'll ever get, which says a lot about why I've never used a computer." Why airbrush anyway? "I get a softening from it that you don't perceive consciously, something you can't do with a brush stroke. Glows, overall tintings, fades in the background—all of these draw your attention back to the brushwork in the figures."





When can you know a piece is done? "I never know, sometimes I could spend an infinite amount of time on something. At some point you reach a fatigue level—and that I don't mean physically, I mean aesthetically—when I don't see the answers anymore, when I don't know what else to do to it. In the end it's either what I wanted or just something to abandon."



RIGHT AND ABOVE: Frank Nazy tables it for the cause—*Superman: Peace on Earth* (1998). BELOW: Man's father-in-law, Steven Katz, provides the irritated scowl for Mr. Mayzittk in *Superman and Batman: World's Funnest* (2000). BOTTOM AND OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: *Comics* author/landlord, Matt Paletti (aka Matt Paletti), in *Batman: War on Crime* (2000). OPPOSITE, TOP AND BOTTOM: *Comics* author's good friend, Sal Manti, has modeled as Captain Marvel since *Kingdom Come*. Here he is posing for *Starline: Power of Hope* (2000).





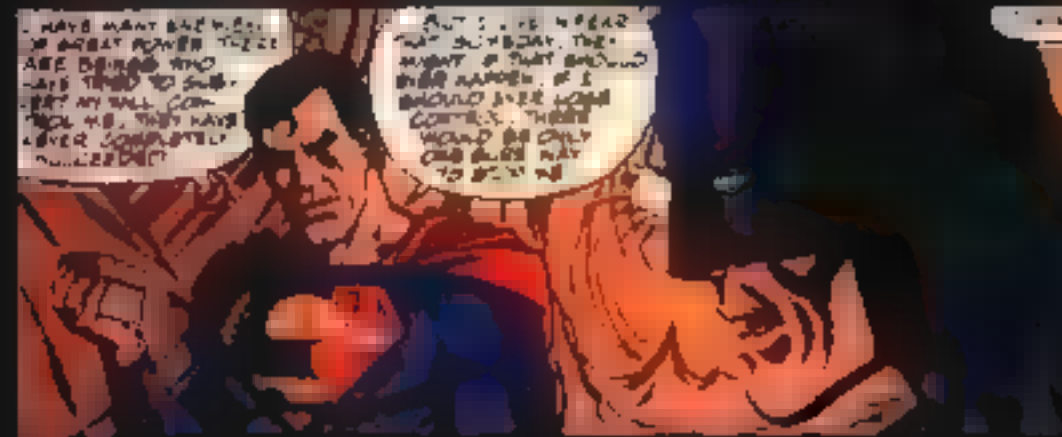
ABOVE: Artist Hilary Barta *flexibly* poses for a Plastic Man retail poster. (DC Direct, 2000). BELOW, RIGHT: Frank Razy poses for the final spread of *Superman: Peace on Earth* (1998).



CREATING A STORY

is promised in the column a closer look than any of the most prolifically intimidating assignments I'd ever gotten: write an eight-page story for Alex to paint especially for this book. It turned out to be both, though much more the former than the latter.

We settled on Superman and Batman together, thanks to an idea from editor Charles Korchman, who also suggested opening with Superman bursting through the globe atop the Daily Planet Building. There's been a trend in the last fifteen years or so toward the idea that the two are actually adversaries and mistrustful of one another. I suppose this is considered "edgy." Call me sentimental, but I've never liked it—it's too much like George Washington turning on Ben Franklin. We wanted to show them as the "World's Finest" team we grew up on. Charlie pointed us in the direction of a story by Roger Stern, Bob McLeod, and Brett Breeding that appeared in *Action Comics* 11054 ("Deadly Covenant," June 1990). The last three panels are below. Where that story ends, ours begins: what happens when Superman, for no discernible reason, goes mad and starts destroying Metropolis? Batman has the means to stop him, but does that mean stopping him, literally, for good?



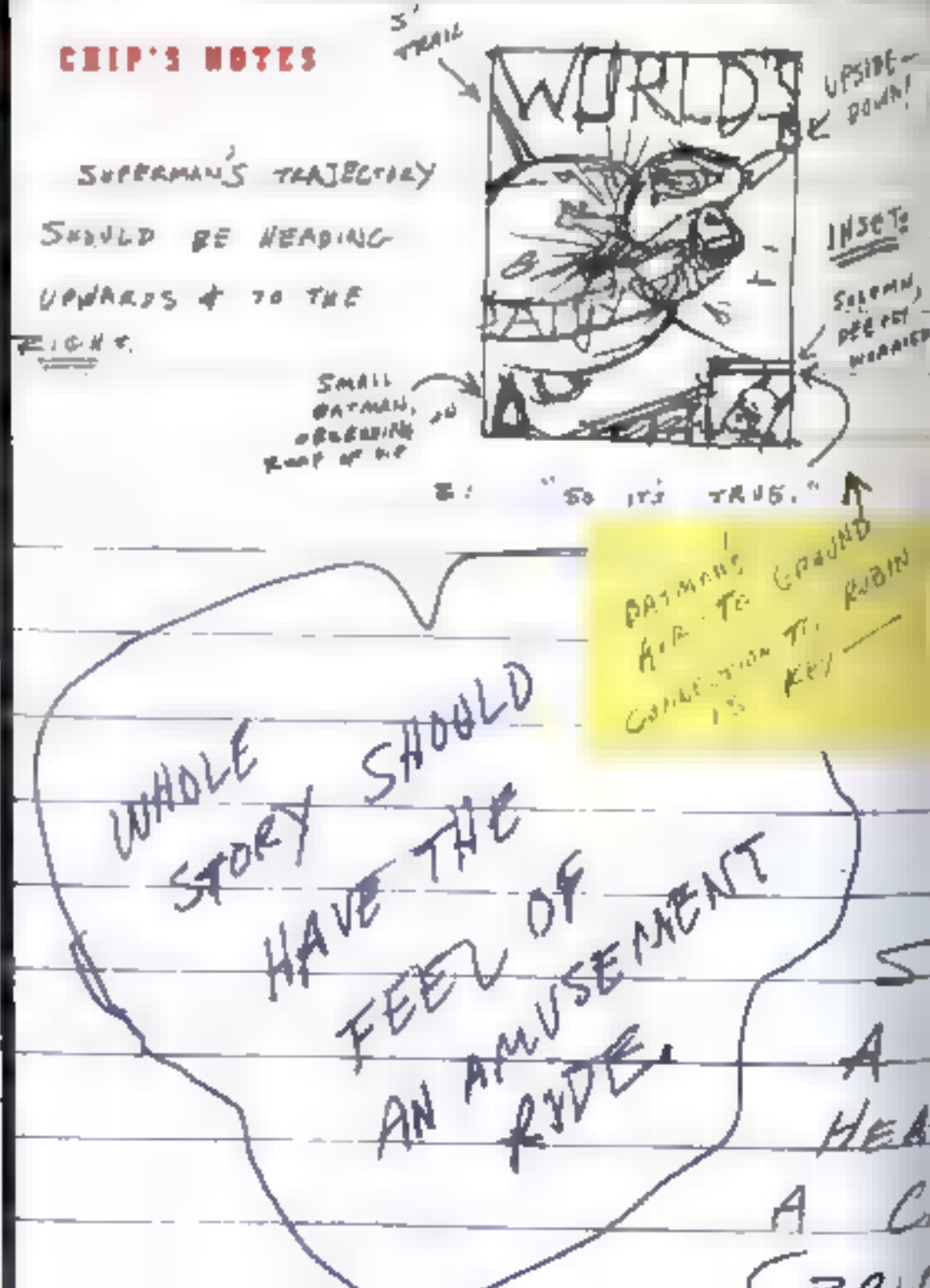
Given scheduling and budget constraints, we had eight pages. Alex's biggest reservation was how to fit something so epic into such a relatively small amount of space. Starting the story after it's begun and ending it before it's over was the answer. One aspect of the length did allow for a new creative experience. Ross says: "I'd never before roughed out an entire story in one shot, with the writer sitting right next to me. It was the most collaborative storytelling process I've been involved in to date." I'd have to agree, and will never forget the sight of Ross producing rough pencils (with no references) that were so fully formed—the final art didn't change, compositionally, in all 60 better cases for delivery I've ever seen.)

Several matters of final dialogue were worked out after the art was completed. For example, on page three Batman attempts to get Superman's attention by shouting "Kal!" which is short for Kal-El, his Kryptonian birthname. I originally wrote "Clark," but Alex felt that Batman wouldn't misperceive Kent's secret identity by screaming his name out loud in public.

Go over and check out the trends on Batman's boots, and keep your eyes peeled for a certain designer/author and his photographer sidekick masquerading as high rise wage slaves on the second to last page.

BELOW: Alex's very first rough sketches for "The Trust." (left). Note he initially had Superman bursting through the Daily Planet globe from above and heading down toward the street. I urged him to reverse it and put the "camera" high above and launch him upward, right, because most of the story takes place in the sky. I also thought it would add a sense of

disorientation to position him upside down in relation to the reader. The shot of Batman with the gun was Alex's idea—very "Duty Harry" and shocking, given Batman's distaste for such weapons. We knew what the ending would be, but I'll admit I had absolutely no idea how we would get there. Alex solved it beautifully.



1

2

3



FINAL PENCILS FOR FIRST PAGE OF THE STORY



ROBIN'S
 TRYING TO
 FIGURE OUT
 HOW TO
 BLOCK SIGNAL —
 HEART
 IN THE MEANTIME
 SUPERMAN ~~IS~~ DOES
 A 180° AND IS
 HEADED TOWARDS
 A CROWDED BUILDING
 (BRIDGE?). BATMAN
 SECONDS. HAS TO DECIDE WHETHER
 OR NOT TO KILL HIM
AIMS GUN.

AND NOW...

THE *MEDIA* WAS ON IT IN A HEARTBEAT, NATURALLY. THE MILITARY WON'T BE FAR BEHIND. THE UNTHINKABLE HAS HAPPENED: THE MOST POWERFUL BEING ON THE PLANET HAS MYSTERIOUSLY GONE *BERSERK*.

AND NOW I'LL DO WHAT I PROMISED HIM.

THE TRUST.

STORY BY **KIDD & ALEX ROSS** LETTERING BY **BOB KLEIN** ARTWORK PHOTOGRAPHED BY **GEOFF SPEAR** SUPERMAN CREATED BY **JOHN BURNHEIM** EDITED BY **CHARLES KOCHMAN** BATMAN CREATED BY **BOB KEENE**

HE DID WARN ME THIS WAS A POSSIBILITY.

POK!

BUT I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT.



CAN I?

OBLIVIOUS. THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.

KAL!!

KAL!



IT'S UP TO ME. UNLESS...

...UNLESS SOME WAY.

BATMAN! COME IN!
I'VE FOUND SOMETHING!!

WHAT IS IT?!!
HURRY!

IT'S A SIGNAL.
ULTRA-HIGH FREQUENCY.
FROM THE METROPOLIS
OBSERVATORY--LIKE NO
TRANSMISSION I'VE
EVER SEEN.

I
THINK IT'S...
ALIEN!

SCRAMBLE
IT! NOW!!

I'M
TRYING!
I NEED
TIME!

CRASH!



TIME - YEARS AGO

I'VE BEEN THINKING. I... LOVE THIS PLANET. ITS PEOPLE.

BUT I HAVE MANY ENEMIES. IF ANY OF THEM MANAGE TO TAKE CONTROL OF ME...TO USE ME AS A WEAPON...

I WANT YOU TO HAVE IT.

...THIS IS THE MEANS TO STOP ME.

"LOIS WOULD NEVER USE IT. BUT YOU, I TRUST, COULD."

BATMAN!
IT'S NO USE!
NOTHING'S WORKING!
AND SIX STEALTH BOMBERS AT TWENTY MILES SOUTHEAST ARE CLOSING IN!




SO THAT'S IT.


MY ONE RULE--THE ONE I SWORE ON MY PARENTS' GRAVE I'D NEVER BREAK. ABOUT GUNS. NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN ABLE TO MAKE ME DO IT. NOT EVEN THE JOKER.

BUT I'LL DO IT FOR YOU.

BLAMM!!



I DIDN'T KNOW AT FIRST
HOW TO MAKE USE OF
YOUR GIFT TO ME.



THERE WAS A
FINAL SOLUTION
I DIDN'T WANT
TO CONSIDER...

...BUT SOMETIMES
THERE ARE *GENTLER*
SOLUTIONS TO BE
FOUND.

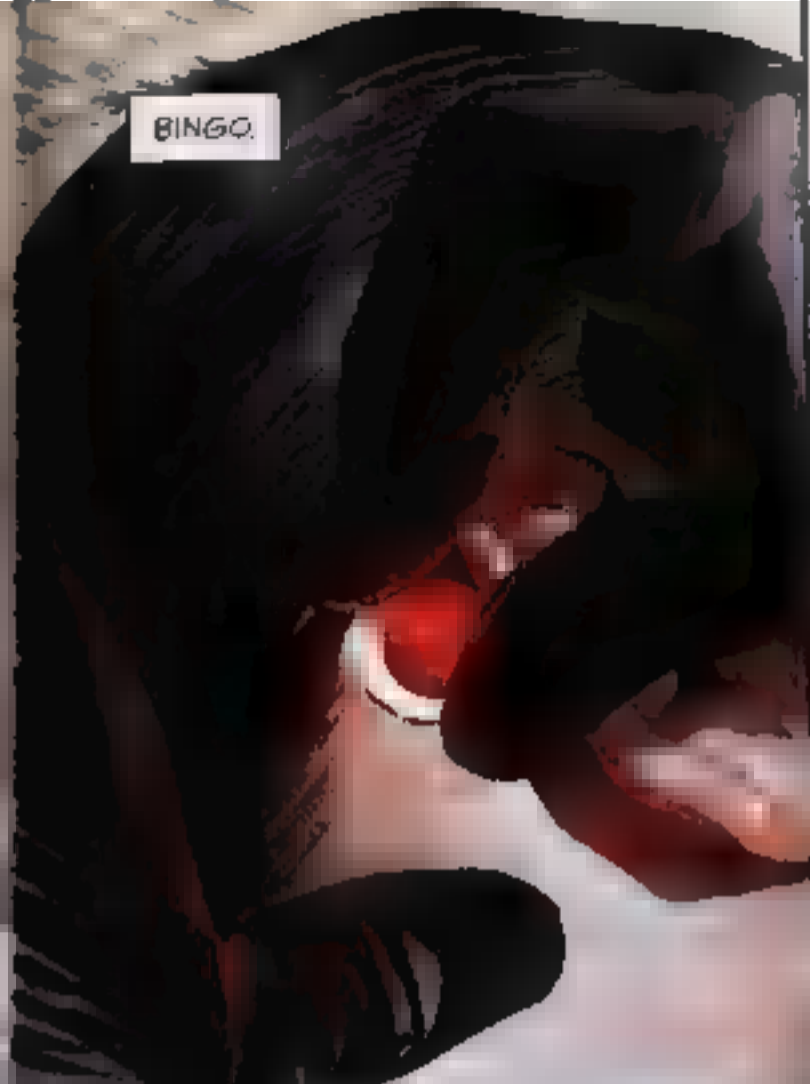


I HAVE ABOUT TEN SECONDS.

OR RATHER,
HE HAS

I GET THE DART BACK
INTO MY LEAD POUCH.
WAS I IN TIME? WHAT'S...

KAL.
CAN YOU
HEAR
ME?



BINGO.



OUR ENEMIES WILL DO ANYTHING. AND THEY ALWAYS LEAVE A CLUE

BRANWAC



YOU OKAY?

I OFTEN WONDER, CLARK: DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE?



YOU ARE THE ORIGINAL MYTH. THE ONE WE'LL ALWAYS BELIEVE.

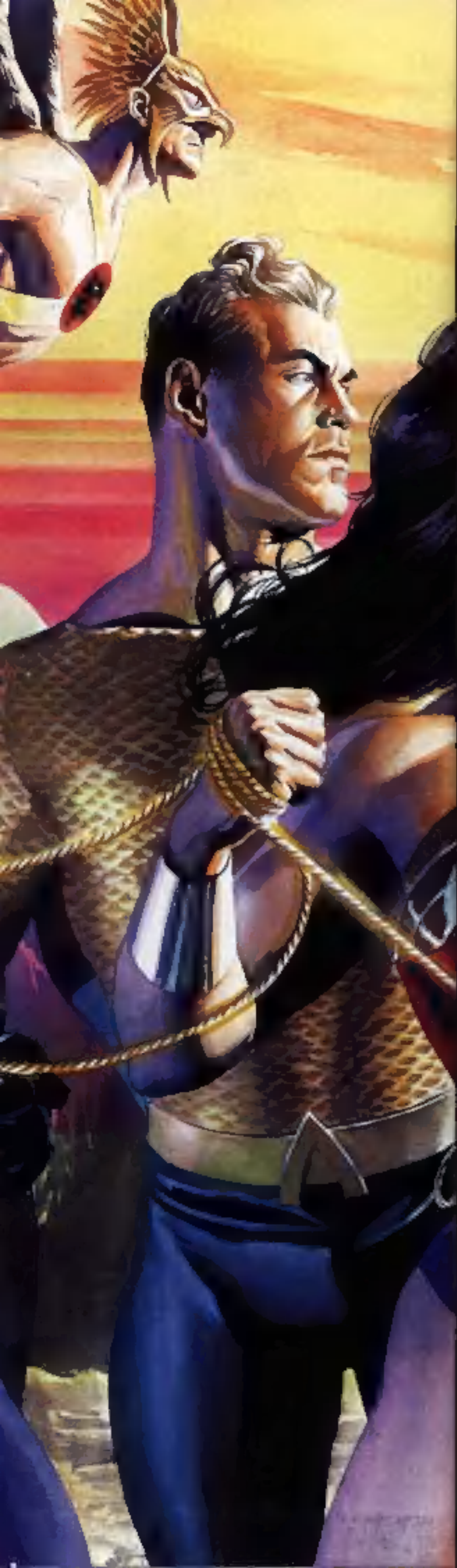
FINE A LITTLE HELP UP, PLEASE



WHAT WOULD WE EVER DO WITHOUT YOU?

FIN.





M.A.R. 2/5/8

"Alex's unique style combines the best of the fantastic and the real, creating a world where myths walk and leave tangible footprints in the sand." —Paul Levitz, President and Publisher, DC Comics

ALEX ROSS has produced more than 1,500 pages of comics material in less than fourteen years—an extraordinary body of work that has earned him every major award in the industry.

Ross was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1970 and eventually settled in Chicago where he attended the American Academy of Art. Among his best-known books are: *Marvels*, *Kingdom Come*, *Uncle Sam*, *Earth X*, *Superman: Peace on Earth*, *Batman: War on Crime*, and *JLA: Liberty and Justice*.


CHIP KIDD is the author and designer of *Batman Collected* and *Peanuts: The Art of Charles M. Schultz*. His book jacket designs for Alfred A. Knopf helped break new ground in the field, from the late 1980s to the present.

The Cheese Monkey, Kidd's first novel, published in 2001, was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year.

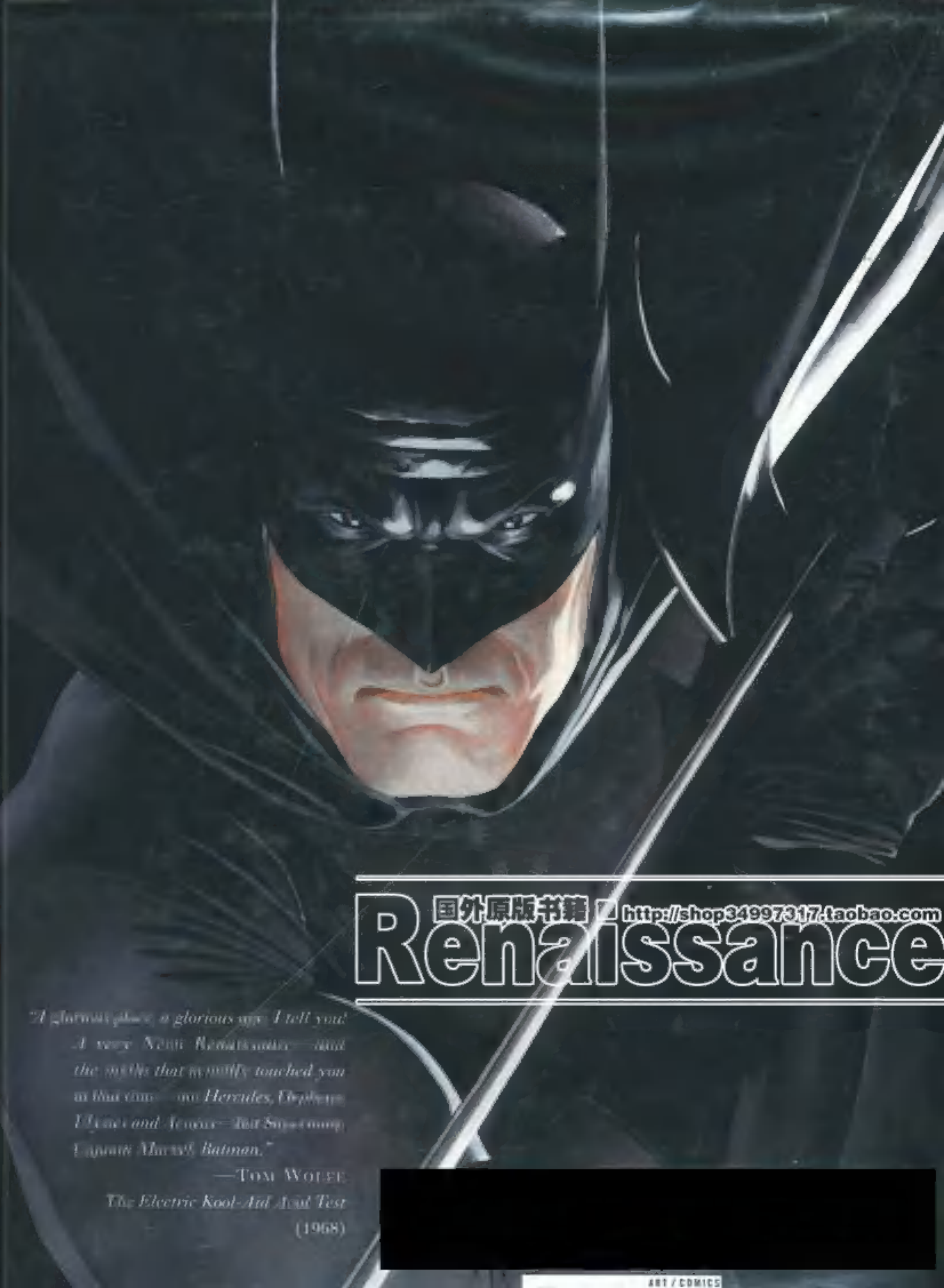
GEOFF SPEAR has photographed for numerous publications, including *Vogue*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *GQ*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times*. His images have also appeared in national ad campaigns for AT&T, American Express, Citibank, and IBM.

His photographs for *Batman Collected* were chosen for the *American Photography* annual of the best of 1996.

JACKET ART BY ALEX ROSS
JACKET PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEOFF SPEAR
JACKET DESIGN BY CHIP KIDD

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Renaissance

*"A glorious place, a glorious way. I tell you,
I love New Renaissance—and
the myths that wondrously touched you
in that time—our Hercules, Egeus,
Iphigenia and Agamemnon—our Superman,
Captain America, Batman."*

—TOM WOLFE

The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test
(1968)